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### **A Third Culture Kid Theology**

### **Constructing Trinity, Christ, and Believers' Identity in Liminality in dialogue with Nozomu Miyahira, Emil Brunner, and Thomas F. Torrance**

Triebel, Christian James

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# **A Third Culture Kid Theology:**

Constructing Trinity, Christ, and Believers' Identity in  
Liminality in dialogue with Nozomu Miyahira, Emil Brunner,  
and Thomas F. Torrance

by

**Christian J. Triebel**

**King's College London, University of London**

Department of Theology and Religious Studies



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## Abstract

This dissertation seeks to present a constructive theology from the perspective of Third Culture Kids (TCKs). TCKs are persons who, due to their parents' occupation, have spent a significant time of their developmental years outside of their parents' home culture. While taking part in their parents' home culture (first culture) and host culture (second culture), their sense of belonging tends to be with others of a similar background (third culture). TCKs, shaped by high mobility and cross-cultural experience, often have a sense of living betwixt and between different worlds and carry with them questions of identity and belonging. This research proposes a theological answer to TCKs' questions of identity and belonging.

First, the potential role of faith in the development of TCKs identity is examined. Faith provides TCKs with an internal locus of integrity and facilitates the consolidation of a fragmented identity on a higher level. Second, key concepts for understanding the experience of TCKs are identified to serve as themes with which to construct a meaningful theology for TCKs. Transculturality, liminality, non-place, liquid modernity, and constructive marginality and mediation are identified as relevant concepts capable of capturing the experience of feeling both at home everywhere and nowhere. Third, having identified key themes for a TCK theology, three areas of theology are addressed to propose a vision of Christianity capable of resonating with TCKs. The doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the person of Christ, and the doctrine of salvation and human identity in God are contextualized utilizing Nozomu Miyahira's theology of 'betweenness', Emil Brunner's doctrine of the identity-bestowing '*Gott-zum-Menschen-hin*', and 'mediation' in the theology of Thomas F. Torrance. Each doctrine is reformulated in terms of liminality, non-place, liquidity, and mediation in order to present a coherent theology TCKs can recognize themselves in and identify with.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### What is this dissertation about?

This dissertation seeks to present a constructive theology from the perspective of Third Culture Kids (TCKs)<sup>1</sup>. TCKs are persons who, due to their parents' occupation, spent a significant time growing up outside of their parents' home culture. While taking part in their parents' home culture (first culture) and host culture (second culture), their sense of belonging tends to be with others of a similar background (third culture). TCKs, shaped by high mobility and cross-cultural experience, often have a sense of living betwixt and between different worlds. The idea for this dissertation grew out of a personal dissatisfaction with the lack of a serious *theology for and by TCKs*. While the 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen the emergence of context specific theologies, there does not exist a proper contextualized 'TCK theology'. Not only has theology failed to specifically address the concerns of TCKs but theology also has neglected incorporating TCKs' insights into its discourse.

This dissertation stands on two presuppositions: First, I believe theology has a meaningful contribution to make to TCKs and, second, I believe TCKs have a valid contribution to make to theology. Rather than merely 'repackaging' traditional theology to make it more acceptable to TCKs (thereby treating TCKs as the object of theology), this work seeks to identify key areas of importance to TCKs and construct a theology shaped by these very concerns (thereby making TCKs the subjects of theology).

I believe the long Christian tradition has resources to offer to enrich TCKs' global lives. I have chosen three areas in theology, (1) the doctrine of God, (2) Christology, and (3) Soteriology, to sketch a broad picture of a constructive theology that can meaningfully address TCKs' questions of belonging and purpose. Similarly,

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<sup>1</sup> By 'TCK' I mean to include 'Adult TCKs (ATCKs)'. Other names for TCKs are: Global Nomads, Third Culture Individuals. More specifically TCKs can be: Missionary Kids, Oil Kids, Military Brats, Diplomat Kids etc. See also: Ruth E. Van Reken, "Third Culture Kids," in *International Encyclopedia of Education (Third Edition)*, ed. Penelope Peterson, Eva Baker, and Barry McGaw (Oxford: Elsevier, 2010). Ann Baker Cottrell, "Explaining Differences: TCKs and Other CCKs, American and Japanese TCKs," in *Writing out of Limbo: International Childhoods, Global Nomads and Third Culture Kids*, ed. Gene H. Bell-Villada, et al. (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2011). Ruth Hill Useem and Ann Baker Cottrell, "Adult Third Culture Kids," in *Strangers at Home: Essays on the Effects of Living Overseas and Coming "Home" to a Strange Land*, ed. Carolyn D. Smith (Bayside, NY: Aletheia, 1996).



I believe that the rich experiences of TCKs can be a resource for the church of this century and her theologians. I have chosen four TCK-themes as spectacles to bring into focus theological ideas that have been downplayed or overlooked by other theologians from different perspectives: (1) 'liminality', i.e. finding oneself betwixt and between two states,<sup>2</sup> (2) 'non-place', i.e. the literal and metaphorical liminal space without identity, history and community,<sup>3</sup> (3) 'liquidity' in identity construction, and (4) mediation as a constructive (as opposed to encapsulating) way to live out TCKs' 'in-betweenness'. Using these concepts as the central themes with which to construct a perspective specific theology, TCKs can contribute by adding to the richness of our corporate theological imagination. A theology for and by TCKs thus addresses TCKs' issues and gives TCKs a voice in the current theological discourse.

### **Who am I?**

In the interest of full disclosure, I need to state at the very beginning of this work that besides an academic curiosity I also have a personal interest in the matter of TCKs and theology. I am myself a TCK and have found theology a rich resource from which to draw on as well as a creative discourse within which I can express myself. A brief introduction of my background will serve to clarify where I come from and give a general sense of who TCKs are.

I was born in 1982 in Yokohama, Japan, to German missionaries working with a North American mission society during their first term in the field. Our family repatriated to Germany every five years for a one-year furlough resulting in frequent and regular relocations between Japan and Germany. My two sisters and I grew up in the eccentric environment shaped by American missionaries, fellow German-speaking expatriates, and our local Japanese neighbourhood. The German expatriate school we attended consisted of an ever changing mosaic of German, Swiss, Austrian, and Japanese pupils, some staying their whole childhood, others leaving as soon as their parent's sponsoring agency, such as corporations, foreign ministries,

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<sup>2</sup> 'Liminality', from the Latin word for 'threshold', describes the ambiguous state of an individual in the middle of a transition. See: Victor Turner, "Liminality and Community," in *Culture and Society*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander and Stephen Seidman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> 'Non-place' was first developed by the Anthropologist Marc Augé (1935- ). See: Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (London: Verso Books, 1995).

educational institutions, or mission societies, issued a reassignment or ordered a furlough. It was in this surreal environment that I was raised as an expatriate German kid in an ethnically and culturally overwhelmingly homogeneous Asian country. It involved the constant switching of frames of reference often resulting in hilarious instances of ‘chanpon’-talk.<sup>4</sup>

I learned the language, adopted the mannerism, and gobbled up the pop culture of our ‘hosts’. My proudest memory is successfully holding down a job at my local ‘izakaya’<sup>5</sup> in my high school and university years. Yet, I grew up as the white German kid among Japanese peers. Friends and strangers I interacted with were always welcoming and many would commend me on my Japanese skills. While this surely was done with the best of intentions it did highlight that I was seen as an outsider, a ‘gaijin’<sup>6</sup>. This feeling was amplified every time my family had to stand in line at the immigration office in Yokohama to renew or change our visas. I needed a permission to reside in the country I was born in, lived in, and later would work in.

Our ‘regular’ expatriate life was interrupted every 5 years when after a long haul flight we found ourselves in our supposed fatherland where everyone spoke our mother tongue. If in Japan I was the ‘German one’ among my friends, now I was the ‘Japanese one’ who came every 5 years and disappeared again after a year. When in Japan I felt at home but was a legal alien, in Germany I felt an alien but was categorized a citizen. Repatriations were not easy for me as the disruption led to a host of questions of belonging and identity. Being bicultural and multi-lingual, I was a ‘both/and’-person but also a ‘neither/nor’-person. I spoke both German and Japanese, had a fairly adequate understanding of both countries, but I found myself neither a German nor a Japanese person. I did not belong anywhere.

After completing my Abitur<sup>7</sup> at the German expatriate school in Yokohama, I chose to remain in Japan to study theology at Tokyo Christian University. I was too much of a perpetual foreigner to be able to imagine a ‘normal’ life in my parents’ home country. This set me on a path of continuing mobility and cross-culturality. After working for two years in Japan as translator, interpreter, and language instructor, I crossed the Pacific to pursue graduate studies in religion at Claremont

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<sup>4</sup> Mixing different languages within one sentence.

<sup>5</sup> Traditional Japanese drinking establishment.

<sup>6</sup> Short for ‘*gaikokujin*’ (外国人) meaning ‘foreigner’.

<sup>7</sup> German A-level exams.

Graduate University in the States, returned to Tokyo to teach a further two years, and moved to London to undertake doctoral studies at King's College London.

It was the study of theology in the context of Asia<sup>8</sup> and of other contextualized theologies<sup>9</sup> in Japan and the States that led me to the question of what exactly the context of my theology was. Was I a culturally dislocated person and thus theologically homeless? Theology had to be indigenous and local if it was to make sense. Was the simultaneous 'both/and' and 'neither/nor' position I held as a TCK a valid location for theological reflection? Furthermore, I asked myself what role theology played in my life. Could theology function as a 'place' to which I belong—a space with identity, history, and fellowship? If for me and other TCKs cross-culturalism and mobility were more salient features in our self-understanding than ethnicity, gender, nationality, or class, what role could Christian faith play in affirming my and other TCKs' experience?

### **What questions do I want to answer in this dissertation?**

The idea for this dissertation arose out of the many questions that confronted me in doing theology locally. While this dissertation cannot answer all questions regarding theology in the context of TCKs, I have selected to look closer at the following three questions:

- (a) What potential role does faith play in the lives of TCKs?
- (b) What is the context or 'place' of TCKs which accurately captures their experience, struggles, and potential?
- (c) What shape would a theology for and by TCKs take which both speaks to and from this particular context or 'place'?

These three questions roughly correspond to the three parts of this dissertation.

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<sup>8</sup> See for example: Kosuke Koyama, *Waterbuffalo Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974). Kazo Kitamori, *Kami No Itami No Shingaku 神の痛みの神学 (Theology of the Pain of God)* (Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha 新教出版社, 1946). Nozomu Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster, 2000); Masao Takenaka, *God Is Rice : Asian Culture and Christian Faith* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986).

<sup>9</sup> See for example: Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Quest for the Living God : Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York: Continuum, 2007). Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity : Global Perspectives* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007).

### **What attempts have been made at a theology for and by TCKs?**

Much has been written about the experience of TCKs, their struggles to identify, and their unique worldview. Originally published in 2001 and revised and updated in 2007, David C. Pollock and Ruth Van Reken's book *Third Culture Kids*<sup>10</sup> stands out as the most widely read popular book on the topic. Notable more recent scholarly works include Gene H. Bell-Villada et al.'s *Writing out of Limbo*<sup>11</sup> and Saija Benjamin and Fred Dervin's *Migration, Diversity, and Education*.<sup>12</sup> While these works give us a good understanding of TCKs, they do not specifically address the issue of theology in the context of TCKs.

So far two attempts worth mentioning have sought to explore the connection between TCKs and theology. The first are the three International Conferences on Missionary Kids (ICMKs) in 1984, 1987, and 1989.<sup>13</sup> The three ICMKs looked at the issues of TCKs primarily through the lens of missionary kids (MKs) and thus naturally included a discussion of personal faith and theology in the context of cross-culturality and mobility. Overall, two complementary views emerged out of the discussions: Firstly, the ICMKs affirmed that Christianity is relevant to the experience of MKs. Christ is described as a quasi-MK who can identify with MKs; Secondly, the ICMKs confirmed that MKs can play a unique role in a globalising church that spans across cultures, nations, and languages. MKs have the transcultural perspective needed for a church whose gospel must be able to transcend times and places. Thus, the ICMKs kicked off an important discussion of how Christianity relates to the experience of TCKs and how TCKs can contribute to the church. The emotional well-being of TCKs within the church became a key point of discussion. However, their theological attempts were rudimentary at best, more pastorally and

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<sup>10</sup> David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition* (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Gene H. Bell-Villada et al., eds., *Writing out of Limbo: International Childhoods, Global Nomads and Third Culture Kids* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Saija Benjamin and Fred Dervin, eds., *Migration, Diversity, and Education : Beyond Third Culture Kids* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>13</sup> Compendiums of the three ICMKs are: Beth A. Tetzels and Pam Mortenson, eds., *Compendium of the International Conference on Missionary Kids: New Directions in Missions: Implications for MKs, Manila, Philippines, November, 1984* (West Battleboro, VT: ICMK, 1986). Pam Echerd and Alice Arathoon, eds., *Understanding and Nurturing the Missionary Family: Compendium of the International Conference on Missionary Kids: Quito, Ecuador, January 4-8, 1987* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1989). *Planning for MK Nurture: Compendium of the International Conference on Missionary Kids: Quito, Ecuador, January 4-8, 1987* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1989). Joyce M. Bowers, ed. *Raising Resilient MKs: Resources for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers* (Colorado Springs, CO: Association of Christian Schools International, 1998).

practically than systematically oriented, and focused one-sidedly on the experience of Christ without making connections to other aspects of theology.

The second attempt at an integration of TCKs and theology came much more recently in the form of David Gibbons's 2007 popular book *The Monkey and the Fish*.<sup>14</sup> Gibbons, himself biracial and a TCK, argues that 'third culture' captures the essence of the gospel. Gibbons uses 'third culture' quite liberally as referring to the mindset willing to reach out across boundaries and leave one's comfort zone even at the cost of risking pain. The book argues, mostly through catchy slogans and anecdotes, that Christians are all called to act in this 'third culture way'. Gibbons's book is certainly thought-provoking in that he looks at the gospel through the lens of TCKs. In this sense, his book is one of a kind. Gibbons's ideas leave the Christian TCK feeling affirmed in their experience and valued as an insider who has already understood a vital principle of the gospel that many non-TCKs have failed to see. Gibbons echoes our presupposition that TCKs have something unique to contribute to Christianity. However, *The Monkey and the Fish* is meant to motivate and inspire leaders to act generously towards others rather than reflect theologically on the experience of TCKs. Thus, it fails to present anything beyond a practical guide to leadership and lacks in theological depth.

These two most prominent examples of grappling with the emergence of TCKs from a Christian point of view highlight the fact that there is both interest and potential in a constructive theology for and by TCKs, especially as MKs are a major subgroup of TCKs. Both examples, however, lack a substantial engagement with theology that is systematic, broad, and coherent. To my knowledge, no work exists that has succeeded in filling this gap in scholarship.

### **What is my methodology?**

In my pursuit of making sense of Christianity for TCKs, I have adopted a method similar to Paul Tillich's 'method of correlation'.<sup>15</sup> Tillich employed as his method the correlation of our human situation with the Christian message. Our human situation raises important questions about who we are. Theology presents the

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<sup>14</sup> Dave Gibbons, *The Monkey and the Fish : Liquid Leadership for a Third-Culture Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 59-66. For a brief summary and analysis of Tillich's 'method of correlation', see: Bernard M. Loomer, "Tillich's Theology of Correlation," *The Journal of Religion* 36, no. 3 (1956).

Christian message as an answer that fits these existential questions through a correlating, common element.<sup>16</sup> It is thus the theologian's task to analyse the current predicament humans find themselves in and construct a theology which speaks to that very situation.

Given the method, this dissertation is naturally divided into two halves: The first half (part one and two) is dedicated to the analysis of the situation of TCKs and the identification of core themes we can use to relate theology to TCKs. The two foremost questions that TCKs ask are the question of identity and place: Who am I? Where do I belong? Core themes to help connect TCK's situation and theology are liminality, non-place, liquidity, and mediation.

The latter half (part three) is dedicated to the exploration of a theological answer to the questions implied in the situation of TCKs using the core TCK themes as the correlating elements. Correlation will take the dual form of both *continuity* and *contrast*. On the one hand, I want to present a constructive theology that utilizes the very themes that describe TCKs' outlook to present this theology in a relevant manner. Here a natural continuity between the situation and the message is needed. TCKs must be able to recognize themselves in their theology. On the other hand, TCKs' predicament must be met with a contrasting theological resolution. The questions of the context must be met with a resonating theological answer. The crippling 'encapsulating marginality' many TCKs experience as a result of their unique upbringing must be met with a purposeful 'constructive marginality' in the Trinity and in Christ.

### **What is the structure of this dissertation?**

I have divided this dissertation into three parts. In part one, I will begin with the analysis of the current situation TCKs find themselves in. This entails defining 'TCK', reflecting on common TCK experiences, analysing how TCKs develop their identity, exploring the role personal faith plays in that identity development, and finally reviewing the attempts of contextualizing theology for TCKs.

In the second part, I will build on our findings and identify core concepts to correlate theology with the experience of TCKs. This entails looking closely at (a) transculturality, (b) liminality, (c) non-place, (d) liquid modernity, (e) encapsulating

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<sup>16</sup> Existentialism in Tillich's case.

and constructive marginality (mediation). Central to all of them is the idea that TCKs are ‘in-between people’ who, positioned between differing parties, are both ‘both/and’ and also ‘neither/nor’. These concepts will serve as the basic building blocks when subsequently constructing a theology for and by TCKs.

In part three, we will delve into our primary objective which is to construct a resonating theology TCKs are able to recognize themselves in and identify with. In this most substantial part I chose three theologians as my dialogue partners: the Japanese theologian Nozomu Miyahira (1966 –), the Swiss theologian Emil Brunner (1889 – 1966), and the Scottish theologian Thomas F. Torrance (1913 – 2007). With the help of these three, I will construct a TCK specific theology covering three areas: the doctrine of God in three eternally liminal persons (Trinity), the person and work of Christ as liminal mediator (Christology), and the new-found identity of believers as mediators through the liminality of the Christ’s life and death (soteriology). The theology of Torrance will be the most substantial source in the development of these three theological areas.

### **Why Miyahira, Brunner, and Torrance?**

The choice of these three theologians from such different backgrounds is not arbitrary. First, all three reflect my own personal diversity: a Japanese theologian, a German-speaking theologian, and a missionary kid. More importantly, however, each thinker supports the construction of a TCK-theology: a theologian engaged in contextualization, a theologian addressing the question of who humans are in the face of nationalism, and a theologian who has woven ‘mediation’ into the very fabric of his theology.

Miyahira will serve to set us on the path towards a contextualized theology. In his work *Towards a Theology of Concord: a Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*<sup>17</sup> Miyahira, first, makes a strong case for the contextualization of theology, second, demonstrates this by making use of the Japanese concept of ‘betweenness’ (*aida/kan*, 間), a concept similar to that of liminality, and, finally, gives us a theological structure we can adopt. He is an ally in his methodology and in his use of ‘betweenness’ as a resource for theology. Miyahira will give us an example I can imitate when using liminality, non-place, and mediation as our key concepts. His

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<sup>17</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*.

theology is structured around three areas, (a) Trinity, (b) Christology, and (c) believers' identity, all treated with 'betweenness' as their core theme. This also gives us an idea of the scope such a contextualized theology should have to demonstrate sufficient coherence and breadth.

Brunner will help us address the issue of Christian identity in contrast to a national identity. His 1938 work *Wahrheit als Begegnung*<sup>18</sup> is written against the backdrop of the Third Reich and deals with the questions of what humans are and who defines humans. Brunner's vision of a Christian identity bestowed on the believer by God through the participation in the death of Christ differs from how Nazi Germany sought to consolidate its national identity. This extreme case of the conflict between a national and ethnocentric identity and a transnational and transcultural identity in Christ will help us demonstrate how Christian faith plays a crucial role in liberating the TCK from the encapsulating marginality of conflicting demands by different cultures and countries. Brunner's portrait of God as the dynamic 'God- towards-humanity' who re-establishes humanity as 'humanity-from-God' will also supplement Miyahira's more static God of 'betweenness' and prepares us for a more explicit doctrine of the Trinity with liminality at its centre.

Finally, Torrance will serve to flesh out our theological construct and give it its depth. Three reasons justify our use of Torrance: First, he is himself a missionary kid and qualifies as a quasi-TCK. His theology undeniably reflects a missionary sensibility and lends itself naturally to our agenda. Second, in Torrance we have a theological heavyweight as a sparring partner. His extraordinary theological breadth and depth will supply the vital theological resources to set this project on a solid foundation.<sup>19</sup> Third, his theology heavily features 'mediation' between the persons of the Trinity in the economy as well as between the two natures of Christ in the incarnation. Since mediation is one of the core concepts we will use to relate theology to TCKs' experience, Torrance's theology is the perfect choice as a springboard for a more explicit TCK theology.

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<sup>18</sup> Emil Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung* (Berlin: Furche-Verlag, 1938). English: *Truth as Encounter : A New Ed., Much Enlarged, of "the Divine-Human Encounter"* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964).

<sup>19</sup> I make extensive use of the following works: Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996); *The Mediation of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1992); *Incarnation : The Person and Life of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008).



### **Why Trinity, Christ, and Christian Identity?**

Given the granted space, I have had to limit myself to exploring only three areas of theology to make my case for a theology for and by TCKs. These are the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the person and work of Christ, and the doctrine of Christian identity. I have found that these three doctrines lend themselves most naturally to a theology with 'betweenness' at its heart. Just as TCKs are the bilingual and bicultural mediators betwixt and between 'home' and 'host', so in theology Christ is the 'bilingual' and 'bicultural' mediator in between God and humanity. Together the three selected theological areas (God-Christ-humanity) thus mirror the theme of being located between two dissimilar places. Each individual area will also feature 'betweenness' at its core.

Our constructive theology needs to conclude with a definite answer to the questions of 'who am I and where do I belong?' and thus the doctrine of our newly founded identity as liminal mediators in Christ naturally comes at the end. If we position the question of our human identity at one end, then it makes the most sense to position God's identity as the eternally liminal being on the other end as its corresponding counterpart. This means that Christ, the mediating person between God and humanity, naturally fits in between as a link that binds the two together. In constructing our theology, the doctrine of God will thus come first, followed by the doctrine of Christ in between and the doctrine of the identity of believers at the end.

Of course, the treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity requires touching upon the revelation of God through the Son and the Spirit in the economy but it seemed appropriate to discuss the mediating person and work of Christ separately and in the light of who God is in Godself. This will show that what God does in Christ corresponds with who God is antecedently, inherently, and eternally. References to the person of Christ as a TCK-figure abound and thus it felt only right to set this in the context of where Christ comes from (Trinity) in order to then properly address what Christ achieves (Christian identity).

Thus while our theological exploration has the doctrine of Christ at its centre, the doctrine of God is its foundation and the doctrine of the Christian identity its outcome. In treating the doctrine of God first, the doctrine of Christ second, and the doctrine of Christian identity last, a theology for and by TCKs portrays a natural movement that goes out from God and flows into creation through Christ to reach its fulfilment in humanity's return to God. These three elements, God, Christ, and

Christian identity, are the least amount of pillars necessary upon which to construct a coherent picture of a theology for and by TCKs. Additionally, they also leave sufficient space to further develop this theology in other areas in the future.

### **What is the hoped for outcome of a theology for and by TCKs?**

Ruth Van Reken and David C. Pollock describe TCKs as often suffering from a deep sense of rootlessness and restlessness.<sup>20</sup> ‘Where are you from?’ can be a dreaded question for someone who seems to be from all over the place and at the same time from nowhere. TCKs often long for a ‘home’ in their fragmented life. Mobility during the developmental years also often leads to a migratory instinct that reminds TCKs that every place they find themselves in is only temporary. When one’s memories are scattered all over the globe the only hope to feel ‘at one’ seems to be by continuously moving. This restlessness can prevent TCKs from forming lasting commitments and discovering their purpose in life. It is my hope that this dissertation can help rootless and restless TCKs discover belonging even in their rootlessness and a commitment to a purpose even in their restlessness in the Christian message. I hope TCKs can feel affirmed in their experience through a tailor-made theology for TCKs.

At the same time, it is my hope that non-TCKs can benefit from the addition of TCKs’ perspective to the study of theology. If the world continues on its path of globalization, TCKs are the perfect population to study in order to understand the future challenges a multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic church will face. If, as Pollock and Van Reken suggest, “TCKs [are] the prototype citizens of future”<sup>21</sup> the study of TCKs gives us a glimpse of what will inevitably also become true for a significant portion of the global population. A theology by TCKs is thus a first step towards a full-fledged theology for the 21<sup>st</sup> century able to address the pressing issues of identity and belonging in the context of transculturality and mobility.

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<sup>20</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 123-29.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

**Part One**  
**TCK-Identity and Christianity**

## Chapter 2

### Who are Third Culture Kids?

#### Introduction

The purpose of part one (chapters 2 to 6) is to define who TCKs are, summarize the experience of growing up as a TCK under four key themes, and analyse how spirituality in general and Christianity in particular assist TCKs in their identity development. Part one concludes with the review of two attempts to make sense of TCKs in the context of Christianity. This chapter analyses the definition of 'TCK'.

#### Definition of Third Culture Kids

This chapter will review the standard definition of 'TCK' and present a profile. David Pollock's description of who a third culture kid (TCK) is has become accepted as the standard definition.<sup>22</sup> He defines TCKs as follows:

A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside their parents' culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background.<sup>23</sup>

Additionally, the term "global nomad", originally coined by Norma McCaig<sup>24</sup>, has come to mean the same as third culture kid. Barbara F. Schaetti has offered a definition of global nomad:

Global nomads are persons of any age or nationality who have lived a significant part of their developmental years in one or more countries outside their passport country because of a parent's occupation. Children raised as global nomads can be the offspring of diplomatic, international business, government agency, international agency, missionary, or military personnel, or indeed of people living internationally mobile lives for any professional reason. Typically, global nomads share a unique cultural heritage.<sup>25</sup>

I treat TCK and global nomad synonymously. The two definitions offer several marks of what it means to be a TCK.

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<sup>22</sup> See for example: Van Reken, "Third Culture Kids."

<sup>23</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 13.

<sup>24</sup> Barbara F. Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model" (Unpublished PhD dissertation, The Graduate College of The Union Institute, 2000), 68.

<sup>25</sup> Barbara F Schaetti and Sheila J. Ramsey, "The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality," *Mobility*, September 1999.

**Any Age:** The experience of growing up as an internationally mobile person exerts its influence even when a TCK becomes an adult and/or settles down and might never move again. Schaetti writes “once a global nomad (or TCK), always a global nomad.”<sup>26</sup> Instead of becoming ‘former TCKs’, they grow up to become adult third culture kids (ATCKs). This dissertation includes ATCKs under the term TCK. Studies usually distinguish between three periods in TCKs’ lives: while still abroad during developmental years, immediately after repatriation (usually during college), and long after repatriation.

**Nationality:** The majority of research focuses on TCKs with US American parents. Major studies have also been done among Japanese TCKs (so-called Kaigai / kikoku-shijos).<sup>27</sup> Some studies have included TCKs of different nationalities<sup>28</sup> and also compared TCKs of different nationalities.<sup>29</sup> Different national subgroups might face different challenges abroad and upon repatriation and exhibit slightly different characteristics,<sup>30</sup> however, the consensus is that TCKs are a transnational phenomenon.<sup>31</sup>

**Significant part of their developmental years:** Pollock and Van Reken argue that the number of years spent abroad alone does not determine the impact that the third culture experience has on the person's development and, therefore, it is impossible to suggest a lower limit of years that a person must have spent abroad to qualify as a TCK.<sup>32</sup> Other variables, such as the person's age during the years abroad, personality, or degree of participation in the host culture, determine the extent to which that person grows up as a TCK. However, a correlation exists between the number of years spent abroad and the degree of worldmindedness in the TCK.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 69.

<sup>27</sup> Momo Kano Podolsky, "Cross-Cultural Upbringing: A Comparison of the "Third Culture Kids" Framework and "Kaigai/Kikoku-Shijo" Studies," *Contemporary Society (Kyoto Women's University Bulletin)* 6 (2007).

<sup>28</sup> Helen Fail, Jeff Thompson, and George Walker, "Belonging, Identity and Third Culture Kids Life Histories of Former International School Students," *Journal of Reserach in International Education* 3, no. 3 (2004).

<sup>29</sup> Michael Gerner et al., "Characteristics of Internationally Mobile Adolescents," *Journal of School Psychology* 30, no. 2 (1992).

<sup>30</sup> See for example: Anu Warinowski, "Finnish Expatriate Families and Their Children: A Complementary Viewpoint," in *Writing out of Limbo: International Childhoods, Global Nomads and Third Culture Kids*, ed. Gene H. Bell-Villada, et al. (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2011).

<sup>31</sup> Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 69-70.

<sup>32</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 21.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas P. Gleason, "The Overseas-Experienced American Adolescent and Patterns of Worldmindedness," *Adolescence* 8, no. 32 (1973).

**Developmental years:** Although the number of years that a person must have spent abroad is ambiguous, the time when the person experiences international mobility is precisely defined. Pollock and Van Reken write that, “[i]t must occur during the developmental years – from birth to eighteen years of age.”<sup>34</sup> This is time when the person develops their sense of self. Laura Cockburn argues that two age groups are especially influenced by cross cultural encounters and mobility.<sup>35</sup> First, children under five are at the stage of building their security and developmental skills. Second, young people in their adolescence years undergo a transition in their lives where their sense of identity takes on greater significance. Exposure to mobility and intercultural experience during these two times intensify the impact on the TCK.

**One or more countries:** Schaetti uses ‘country’ and Pollock employs ‘culture’ to describe the temporary environment that differs significantly from the parent's country/culture. Foreign country and foreign culture might coincide but do not have to. So-called ‘domestic TCKs’ can go through a similar third culture experience moving from one subculture to another without ever crossing international borders.<sup>36</sup> Although studies do not usually make a distinction between the number of countries a person has lived in, research suggests that the more countries or cultures a person has lived in the more worldminded the TCK becomes<sup>37</sup> and the closer the expatriate family grows.<sup>38</sup> Even those who stay in a single host country are constantly exposed to mobility and change as members of the expatriate community regularly transfer in and out of the TCK's life. Furthermore, the degree of difference between the host culture and the parent's culture seems to impact TCKs' experience during expatriation and repatriation.<sup>39</sup> The meaning of ‘third culture’ is stretched as there might be more than one first country/culture in case of multinational/multicultural families and more than one second country/culture in the case of multiple overseas

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<sup>34</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 21.

<sup>35</sup> Laura Cockburn, "Children and Young People Living in Changing Worlds," *School Psychology International* 23, no. 4 (2002): 480.

<sup>36</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 32.

<sup>37</sup> Gleason, "The Overseas-Experienced American Adolescent and Patterns of Worldmindedness."

<sup>38</sup> Ruth Hill Useem and Richard D. Downie, "Third-Culture Kids," *Today's Education* 65, no. 3 (1976). Reprints of his article can also be found as chapters in the following two books: Karen Curnow McCluskey, ed. *Notes from a Traveling Childhood: Readings for Internationally Mobile Parents and Children* (Washington, D.C.: Foreign Service Youth Foundation, 1994), 65-71. Bell-Villada et al., *Writing out of Limbo: International Childhoods, Global Nomads and Third Culture Kids*, 18-24.

<sup>39</sup> Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 72.

assignments. 'Third' here takes on the meaning of 'in-between' rather than its numerical value.

**Passport country/culture:** Rarely is a TCK's 'home' identical with the passport country and culture. The passport country/culture often designates an inherited culture that TCKs might only experience indirectly through what they learn from their parents, short vacations or furloughs, representations in the media, and/or passport country schools in host countries. TCKs' expectations of what the passport country is like are likely to be unrealistic.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, TCKs might have more than one nationality, further complicating the identification with a specific passport country. In any case, Carolyn Smith suggests that some TCKs develop a "Rubber-Band Nationality" that is stretched beyond the confines of a single nation.<sup>41</sup> Smith writes that, on the one hand, TCKs might "feel like a citizen from all over"<sup>42</sup> and, on the other hand, might simultaneously "[not] feel that they 'belong' anywhere."<sup>43</sup> Whereas for non-TCK peers 'belonging', 'home', and 'nationality' usually coincide, this is rarely the case for TCKs. Furthermore, the TCK's parents' sense of belonging to the passport country and the TCK's sense of passport country affiliation often differ significantly. Thus even among family members 'nationality' is experienced differently.

**Parents' occupation:** Instead of national origin, the TCKs' parents' occupation and the sponsoring organization serve to classify TCKs into subgroups. Ruth Hill Useem and Richard Downie write that "one of the first questions a TCK asks a new arrival is 'What does your father do?' Or 'Who is your father with?' The answer helps to place young people socially."<sup>44</sup> Typically sponsoring agencies include mission societies, the military, the state departments (embassies), international and multinational corporations (e.g. oil companies), academic institutions (e.g. international schools, universities), and international organizations (e.g. WHO, Unicef). Useem and Downie comment that TCKs' parents are "usually highly educated or highly skilled people who are forging the networks that intertwine and

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>41</sup> Carolyn D. Smith, "World Citizens and "Rubber-Band Nationality"," in *Strangers at Home: Essays on the Effects of Living Overseas and Coming "Home" to a Strange Land*, ed. Carolyn D. Smith (Bayside, New York: Aletheia Publications, 1996).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>44</sup> Ruth Hill Useem and Richard D. Downie, "Third-Culture Kids," in *Writing out of Limbo: International Childhoods, Global Nomads and Third Culture Kids*, ed. Gene H. Bell-Villada, et al. (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2011), 19.

interrelate the peoples of the world.”<sup>45</sup> According to Thomas Gleason, the family’s sponsoring agency directly influences the degree to which a TCK comes into contact with the host people and culture.<sup>46</sup> The closer ties the TCK builds to the host country to the more worldminded the TCK becomes. Among the first five sponsors mentioned above, on average, missionary kids spend the longest time abroad, learn more second and third languages, and feel more at home in the host country compared to dependants of other sponsor agency workers.<sup>47</sup> One common aspect that TCKs who grow up within the organizational structures of their parents’ sponsors have is what Ruth Hill Useem calls “representational roles.”<sup>48</sup> TCKs are seen as “little ambassadors” and their actions are taken to reflect the sponsoring organization.<sup>49</sup> TCKs are often taught that their families are representatives of “something bigger” such as the government, God, headquarters, etc. and the whole family is expected to conform to the organizations’ values and standards.<sup>50</sup> This often means that TCKs have to put their parent’s sponsoring organization’s demands first, and their own wishes second. For example, relocations are often ordered by the agencies and leave the TCK with the impression that their lives are governed by a higher authority and that resistance is futile.

***Build relationship to all of the cultures while not having full ownership in any:*** Due to the international mobility, a TCK’s friends and memories are scattered all over the world. Similarly, a TCK’s cultural heritage and linguistic skills draw on a multitude of sources. In this sense, a TCK is ‘at home everywhere.’ At the same time, however, Pollock and Van Reken suggest that this also gives rise to the notion that TCKs are ‘at home nowhere’ as it is impossible to bring the plethora of influences that constitutes the TCK into the “here and now.”<sup>51</sup> Home continues to elude the TCK and is deferred to the “there and then.” While growing up under the influence of particular cultures, full ownership in the culture, even if desired by the TCK, is often denied by the host population due to legal restrictions, ethnicity, language barriers, and/or educational differences among other factors. This issue of being “at home everywhere and nowhere” or, in other words, “a part of and apart

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Gleason, "The Overseas-Experienced American Adolescent and Patterns of Worldmindedness."

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 15.

<sup>49</sup> Cottrell, "Explaining Differences: Tcks and Other Ccks, American and Japanese Tcks," 60-61.

<sup>50</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 18.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 23.



from” host and passport cultures typically causes a deep sense of rootlessness and restlessness in the TCK's life.<sup>52</sup>

***Elements from each culture may be assimilated:*** Cultural practices from the passport as well as host country/ies are incorporated into the cultural heritage of TCKs. Each place that the TCK spends time at during the formative years leaves its distinctive mark on the TCK's sense of self, thereby creating what might appear as a diversity of people with not only different nationalities, languages, classes, ethnicities, but also differing cultural norms and values. However, Pollock and Van Reken argue that “the third culture is more than the sum total of the parts of home and host culture. If it were only that, each TCK would remain alone in his or her experience.”<sup>53</sup> In other words, the third culture is not a “hybrid culture” and TCKs are not primarily categorized as bi/multi-cultural. Affirming Pollock and Van Reken's point, Ann Baker Cottrell argues that “TCKs incorporate a feeling of connection with all the countries and peoples they have experienced as a TCK, but ownership of none.”<sup>54</sup> Thus while being influenced by various cultures, TCKs do not fully identify with any of the individual strands of influences in their lives and any one of these cultural sources cannot fully account for the TCK experience. Thus the above statement must be understood in the context of the following statement.

***Share a unique cultural heritage / the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background:*** Pollock and Van Reken argue that “although each [TCK] has differing points of identification with his or her host culture (...) it is obvious that their commonalities of feelings and experiences far outweigh their differences”<sup>55</sup> and Cottrell adds that “in spite of these significant differences, TCKs from all different passport countries find an immediate bond with one another.”<sup>56</sup> The unique heritage that TCKs share and belong to is the ‘third culture’. Van Reken observed that when TCKs meet there is an “instant, almost magical connection” Pollock called “a reunion of strangers.”<sup>57</sup> Bill Peterson and Laila Plamondon remarked the following in the conclusion of their study of TCKs:

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 123-29.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>54</sup> Ann Baker Cottrell, "TCKs and Other Cross Cultural-Kids," *Japanese Journal of Family Sociology* 18, no. 2 (2007): 60.

<sup>55</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 26.

<sup>56</sup> Cottrell, "TCKs and Other Cross Cultural-Kids," 57.

<sup>57</sup> Ruth E. Van Reken, "Cross-Cultural Kids: The New Prototype," in *Writing out of Limbo: International Childhoods, Global Nomads and Third Culture Kids*, ed. Gene H. Bell-Villada, et al. (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2011), 29.

Despite diversity in TCK membership, interviewees talked about “the TCK experience” in an unusually unified way. No matter how different the overt content of their stories, TCKs seemed to share a latent script. (...) This underlying script revolves around the shared experience of having grown up abroad. The exact country did not matter; the interviewees all expressed the feeling that they were part of a special in-group who were different from American peers living domestically.<sup>58</sup>

The fragmentation experienced of neither fully belonging to the host nor passport country works as a source of solidarity with others of similar experience and is more salient in the TCK's self-concept than their ties to either host or passport country. Thus, the similarities to other TCKs carry more meaning than the similarities to host or passport country peers.

In conclusion, from the definition of TCKs there emerges the concept of a group of people that creates a sense of belonging which deviates from conventional identification following national, racial, or ethnic demarcations. Although rather exclusive due to the TCK's highly unusual circumstances during the developmental years, it is simultaneously a radically inclusive group that disregards national, racial, or ethnic backgrounds in favour of a shared experience that highlights common humanity.<sup>59</sup> In an increasingly globalizing world their significance cannot be underestimated. Rather than marginal roles, TCKs play central roles in the important contact zones where differences clash and are negotiated.<sup>60</sup> Rather than fragmented identities, TCKs display integrated identities. Rather than isolated figures, TCKs act as links between various groups of people.

From reviewing the definition of TCKs, there emerges the concept of ‘the third’ or ‘the in-between’ which is both ‘neither/nor’ and simultaneously ‘both/and’. It cannot be reduced to the sum of its individual influences.

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<sup>58</sup> Bill E. Peterson and Laila T. Plamondon, "Third Culture Kids and the Consequences of International Sojourns on Authoritarianism, Acculturative Balance, and Positive Affect," *Journal of Research in Personality* 43, no. 5 (2009): 762.

<sup>59</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 235-36.

<sup>60</sup> Jutta König, "Moving Experience: Dialogues between Personal Cultural Positions," *Culture & Psychology* 15, no. 1 (2009).

## Chapter 3

### Themes in Third Culture Kid Literature

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I will further explore the characteristics of TCKs following the four common themes proposed by Barbara Schaetti: change, relationships, worldview, and cultural orientation.<sup>61</sup> These four themes will supplement the static definition of TCK in chapter one with a more dynamic description of how TCKs experience their in-betweenness.

#### 1. Change

Change is one of the few constants that accompany TCKs throughout their internationally mobile upbringings. From early on, TCKs learn not only to survive change, but to thrive amidst change. Even when not moving themselves, members of the expatriate community constantly come and go as they are transferred by their sponsoring organizations. Norma McCaig writes that:

in an era when global vision is an imperative, when skills in intercultural communication, linguistic ability, mediation, diplomacy, and the management of diversity are critical, global nomads are better equipped in these areas by the age of eighteen than are many adults. Why? Because they have spent years developing these skills as strategies for social survival in times of transition.<sup>62</sup>

TCKs learn to become flexible and adaptable when faced with multiple occasions of change.<sup>63</sup> The majority of TCKs state that they can “relate to anyone regardless of differences such as race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality.”<sup>64</sup> McCaig speaks of TCKs acting like “cultural chameleons”<sup>65</sup> capable of carefully observing their situations and conforming to the demands of each. This makes them “keen observers

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<sup>61</sup> Schaetti and Ramsey, "The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality." Schaetti and Ramsey's article is published online. I will use paragraph numbers instead of page numbers. For a detailed analysis see: Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 77-83.

<sup>62</sup> Norma M. McCaig, "Understanding Global Nomads," in *Strangers at Home: Essays on the Effects of Living Overseas and Coming "Home" to a Strange Land*, ed. Carolyn D. Smith (New York: Aletheia Publications, 1996), 100.

<sup>63</sup> Ann Baker Cottrell, "ATCKs Have Problems Relating to Own Ethnic Groups," *NewsLinks* vol. xiii, no. 2 (1993). All articles from *NewsLinks* are published online. For direct quotes, I will use paragraph numbers instead of page numbers. Gerner et al., "Characteristics of Internationally Mobile Adolescents."

<sup>64</sup> Cottrell, "ATCKs Have Problems Relating to Own Ethnic Groups," par. 9.

<sup>65</sup> McCaig, "Understanding Global Nomads," 100.

of human behaviour, developing the invaluable ability to suspend judgment while examining both sides of an issue or situation.”<sup>66</sup> The experience of constant change thus gives TCKs an advantage when facing difference.

With constant change also comes lifelong restlessness. Schaetti observes that “[i]t is not uncommon that [TCKs] develop a measure of confidence in the process of change, and perhaps even become so accustomed to change that life without it seems somehow incomplete.”<sup>67</sup> This sense of restlessness, rooted in the regular pattern of mobility, is behind the urge to keep on moving even in adulthood that a majority of TCKs experience. Even when settling in one place, adult TCKs often generate periodic and regular change by switching jobs or merely rearranging household furniture.<sup>68</sup>

Finally, constant geographical change poses a difficulty for TCKs when faced with the question of ‘where are you from?’ and ‘who are you?’. Schaetti suggests ‘home’ is typically not a singular geographical place but a plurality of relationships.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, the question of belonging cannot be answered in terms of a single place or even multiple places but must be answered in terms of alternative non-contingent categories. This also means it takes TCKs longer than their non-TCK peers to figure out who they are and while TCKs can be better at adapting they are slow to commit.<sup>70</sup> Thus, change, while helping TCKs develop invaluable skills to cope with difference, leaves them with a deep sense of “rootlessness and restlessness”<sup>71</sup> that usually lasts a lifetime.

## **2. Relationships**

Pollock and Van Reken argue that due to the constant flux of people entering and leaving TCKs' lives, they “build a rich international network [of people]” which spans the world.<sup>72</sup> This is an example of the fragmentation of TCKs’ sense of who they are. It is often not easy to keep up with all relationships and might result in disappointments and feelings of loss. However, TCKs also learn

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 100-01.

<sup>67</sup> Schaetti and Ramsey, “The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality,” par. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Schaetti, “Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model,” 77.

<sup>69</sup> Schaetti and Ramsey, “The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality,” par. 5.

<sup>70</sup> Ann Baker Cottrell and Ruth Hill Useem, “TCKs Experience Prolonged Adolescence,” *NewsLinks* vol. xiii, no. 1 (1993): par. 5, 6.

<sup>71</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 123-29.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 132.

to enter into deep and valued relationships relatively quicker than their non-TCK peers. Pollock and Van Reken give three reasons TCKs skip superficial levels of conversation to relate to others at a deeper level.<sup>73</sup>

First, TCKs jump into relationships fairly quickly because they have had to start so many. Pollock and Van Reken write that TCKs “have learned to observe the dynamics of a situation, ask questions that can help open a door, hopefully be sensitive to cultural cues of what is or is not appropriate (...), and respond appropriately.”<sup>74</sup> Whereas non-TCKs might at first shy away from topics which require to give one's opinion or express one's deeper feelings, TCKs see it as an opportunity to connect with the counterpart more efficiently.

Second, TCKs' international experience naturally influences their choice of topic in favour of international politics, crises, differing religious or cultural views, etc. TCKs feel more comfortable having a discussion about these topics than conversations about pop culture that their passport country peers might find more entertaining.

Third, TCKs hasten to develop relationships because of previous experiences of having to say goodbye too soon too often. “Why waste time in small talk?”<sup>75</sup> Pollock and Van Reken ask, when there might not be another opportunity to get to know the person better. Thus, the TCK lifestyle can result in “forced extroversion.”<sup>76</sup> At the same time, TCKs learn not to get too emotionally involved and dependent on the relationship as they instinctively feel that they have to protect themselves from the pain of losing that relationship. This is reflected in the fact that Pollock and Van Reken devote two major sections of their book on “unresolved grief” caused by cycles of losses of relationships, status, lifestyle, possessions, role models, system identities, etc., resulting in denial, anger, depression, withdrawal, rebellion, vicarious grief, or delayed grief.<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, TCKs' relationships to other TCKs are often based on the common experience of difference. TCKs bond with others of similar

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Schaetti, “Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model,” 78.

<sup>77</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 74-83, 159-65.

experience due to the fact that they neither fit into the host nor passport country environment. Schaetti concludes that “these relationships [to other TCKs] give global nomads their sense of belonging.”<sup>78</sup> Relationships are thus the basis of fragmentation that distinguishes TCKs from their non-TCK peers as well as the basis of their sense of belonging to TCKs.

### 3. Wordview

One of the most distinctive marks of TCKs is their expanded worldview. Thomas Gleason argues that TCKs exhibit patterns of ‘worldmindedness’, defined as “an expression or manifestation of openmindedness toward differing concepts of national identity and cross-cultural values.”<sup>79</sup> New patterns of behaviour emerge from this worldview. Pollock and Van Reken call it a “three dimensional view of the world” and argue that it gives TCKs the sense that there is more than one way to look at the same issue.<sup>80</sup> They explain that,

because [TCKs] have lived in so many places, smelled so many smells, heard so many strange sounds, and been in so many strange situations, throughout their lives when they read a story in the newspaper or watch it on TV, the flat odorless images there transform into an internal 3-D panoramic picture show.<sup>81</sup>

TCKs thus often have a more realistic perspective of the diversity and complexity of life due to their global experience. The TCK's perspective extends beyond national borders and is capable of holding several opposing points of view at the same time. Therefore, Schaetti argues that TCKs are aware that “truth is relative”<sup>82</sup> with which she means that cultural values are seen as relative by the TCK. TCKs’ ethnorelative position (as opposed to ethnocentric) shows appreciation of different norms and values in differing contexts and the awareness that all positions are culturally influenced.<sup>83</sup>

According to Schaetti, underlying the ability to suspend judgment and accept situational values and norms is the view that different people all share a

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<sup>78</sup> Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 80.

<sup>79</sup> Gleason, "The Overseas-Experienced American Adolescent and Patterns of Worldmindedness," 487.

<sup>80</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 88.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>82</sup> Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 80.

<sup>83</sup> For more on ethnorelativism, see: Milton J Bennet, "Towards Ethnocentrism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity," in *Education for the Intercultural Experience*, ed. R. Michael Paige (Main, USA: Intercultural Press, 1993).

“fundamental humanness.”<sup>84</sup> Pollock and Van Reken make the same point when they argue that TCKs see through the national, racial, ethnic, or economic differences to connect with people through their common humanity. According to the two authors, “[w]hen TCKS (...) see this most fundamental fact of the human likeness they share with others, they don't need to fear losing their sense of identity, no matter where they are.”<sup>85</sup> Thus, TCKs tend not to feel threatened when confronted with difference but instead connect with others on a deeper human level.

Furthermore, TCKs typically maintain an international dimension throughout their lives in their choice of university major, occupation, friends, and other areas such as volunteering.<sup>86</sup> This has a concrete consequence, as Ruth Hill Useem has observed, in that “[U.S. American TCKs] relate Americans to the rest of the world and interpret the outside world to the immediate world in which they live. Significant proportions of them actually do this for a living.”<sup>87</sup> TCKs' international involvement might spring from personal interest but often results in mediating between countries, cultures, or languages. This is illustrated by Useem and Cottrell in another finding that describes TCKs as helpers and problem solvers. Their study shows that “in situations where there is a conflict or misunderstanding [TCKs] are the ones who step in to mediate.”<sup>88</sup> The experience of having been linguistically or culturally helpless in a foreign environment while growing up internationally motivates TCKs to act as mediators for others in similar situations.

Schaetti argues that TCKs' global worldview is shaped by certain “birthrights,”<sup>89</sup> specific intercultural skills that TCKs naturally develop. These include, among others, a comfort with ambiguity, refined observational skills, multilingualism, and the capacity to work effectively with different people in different situations.

This expanded worldview, however, can pose several challenges. Among them is the accusation of confused loyalties and lack of convictions. Pollock and Van Reken write that “[TCKs are left with] a sense of confusion about such complex

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<sup>84</sup> Schaetti and Ramsey, “The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality,” par. 8.

<sup>85</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 236.

<sup>86</sup> Ann Baker Cottrell and Ruth Hill Useem, “ATCKs Maintain Global Dimensions Throughout Their Lives,” *NewsLinks* vol. xiii, no. 4 (1994).

<sup>87</sup> Ruth Hill Useem, “TCKs Four Times More Likely to Earn Bachelor's Degrees,” *ibid.* vol. xii, no. 5 (1993): par. 24.

<sup>88</sup> Useem and Cottrell, “Adult Third Culture Kids,” 33.

<sup>89</sup> Schaetti, “Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model,” 81.

things as politics, patriotism, and values.”<sup>90</sup> The intercultural flexibility and adaptability that TCKs display make non-TCKs question what the TCK’s own position is. The following comments by Sophia Morton, herself a TCK, illustrate this “Cultural Chameleon/Onion” dilemma well:

My basic shape camouflages itself in the colours of whatever surroundings I find myself in. I am adept at playing the appropriate roles. But do I have a colour of my own apart from those I appropriate? If I cease to play any role, would I be transparent? To mix metaphors, if I peeled away the layers of the roles I adopt, would I find nothing at the centre? Am I, after all, an onion – nothing but the sum of my layers?<sup>91</sup>

The question with which Morton is confronted is one of relativism. Is everything relative in the worldview of TCKs or are there certain things that hold true regardless of the transient situation? Schaetti argues that relative truth must be supplemented by “personal truth,” which, to use Morton's metaphor, constitute the natural colour of the chameleon and the centre of the onion.<sup>92</sup> Schaetti explains that “[d]eveloping, resolving and expressing a multicultural self-concept, then, requires the capacity to hold an internal rather than external point of reference for one's identity. The capacity to do so is based upon a non-contingent, overarching, and spiritual locus of integrity.”<sup>93</sup> In other words, developing a stable global worldview that incorporates conflicting demands hinges on the ability to find a core identity that transcends these particular peripheral demands without competing with these as yet another demand among many demands.

#### 4. Cultural Orientation

How TCK understand themselves in terms of cultural identity and belonging is a complex issue that evades straight forward answers.<sup>94</sup> As the name suggests, TCKs

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<sup>90</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 90.

<sup>91</sup> Sophia Morton, "Let Us Possess One World," in *Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing up among Worlds*, ed. David.C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2001), 308.

<sup>92</sup> Schaetti and Ramsey, "The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality," par. 8.

<sup>93</sup> Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 58.

<sup>94</sup> Concerning issues of TCK identity, see for example: Fail, Thompson, and Walker, "Belonging, Identity and Third Culture Kids Life Histories of Former International School Students."; Trevor Grimshaw and Coreen Sears, "'Where Am I From?' 'Where Do I Belong?' The Negotiation and Maintenance of Identity by International School Students," *ibid.*7 (2008); Coreen Sears, "Integrating Multiple Identities: Narrative in the Formation and Maintenance of the Self in International School Students," *ibid.*10, no. 1 (2011); Andrea M. Moore and Gina G. Barker, "Confused or Multicultural: Third Culture Individuals' Cultural Identity," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* (2011); Raquel C. Hoersting and Sharon Rae Jenkins, "No Place to Call Home: Cultural Homelessness, Self-Esteem and Cross-Cultural Identities," *ibid.*35, no. 1; Joe Greenholtz and Jean Kim, "The Cultural Hybridity of Lena: A Multi-Method Case Study of a Third Culture Kid," *ibid.*33, no. 5 (2009);



belong to 'the third culture', but the question of what exactly this culture without geographical border, without a language, without racial or class distinction, without ethnicity is, is not easily defined. What is clear is that the two influences that create this third culture are, first, high mobility, and, second, exposure to multiple cultures.<sup>95</sup>

When third culture had not gained wide acceptance as the term to describe the cultural orientation of internationally mobile children an alternative term was "marginal people."<sup>96</sup> TCKs in their rootlessness and restlessness certainly experience being "terminally unique"<sup>97</sup> in their marginality at one point or another. Schaetti and Ramsey, however, argues that the space in-between and on the very margin, neither completely belonging to the host culture, nor completely belonging to the passport culture, yet somehow being related to both host culture and the passport culture, is where TCKs are culturally at home.<sup>98</sup> They write, "exposed to multiple cultural traditions during their developmental years, global nomads have the opportunity to achieve identities informed by all, constricted by none, balanced on the thresholds of each."<sup>99</sup> TCKs can be described as 'threshold people' who have deliberately made being 'the third', i.e. 'the in-between', their location when constructing a unique TCK-identity and creating a sense of belonging with other TCKs. By claiming 'the third' as their own unique space, TCKs are constructive rather than encapsulated in their cultural marginality.<sup>100</sup> It is this very elusive and fragile 'third' space in-between others that is the main subject this investigation.

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Richard Pearce, "When Borders Overlap: Composite Identities in Children in International Schools," *Journal of Reserach in International Education* 10, no. 2 (2011).

<sup>95</sup> Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 82. For a detailed analysis of the two factors of mobility and cross-culture upbringing see: Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 39-84.

<sup>96</sup> David C. Pollock, "Being a Third Culture Kid: A Profile," in *Understanding and Nurturing the Missionary Family : Compendium of the International Conference on Missionary Kids*, ed. Pamela Sheetz de Echerd and Alice Arathoon (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1989), 244. See also: Robert E. Park, "Human Migration and the Marginal Man," *American Journal of Sociology* 33, no. 6 (1928). Everett V. Stonequist, "The Problem of the Marginal Man," *ibid.* 41, no. 1 (1935).

<sup>97</sup> Schaetti and Ramsey, "The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality," par. 11. For more on 'terminal uniqueness' see: Janet M. Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training," in *Education for the Intercultural Experience*, ed. R. Michael Paige (Maine, USA: Intercutlural Press, Inc., 1993).

<sup>98</sup> Schaetti and Ramsey, "The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality."

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 18.

<sup>100</sup> Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training."

## Questions that Remain

Having examined who TCKs are and what common themes cut across the apparent differences in this group, there are several questions that emerge. First of all, many descriptions of TCKs seem to accept an essentialized definition of culture.

Determinist and essentialist images of culture and identity seem to underlie the model of a first, second, and third culture. Richard Pearce criticizes this commenting that “[c]ulture is clearly *not* a normative force which imposes complete uniformity of values, in any imaginable community. Identity is clearly *not* a set of characteristics permanently and rigidly inherent in a given person.”<sup>101</sup> Can we still speak of a ‘third culture’ without relying on these outdated notions of culture? Furthermore, while TCK profiles are useful in identifying broad trends, the reality is that no essential third culture exists. Is the ‘third culture’ a culture among other cultures, such as Japanese culture or German culture, or is it a misnomer that belongs into a different category from ‘culture’ altogether? Clearly a better model for ‘culture’ that takes into account the diversity within cultures as well as the continuity between different cultures is needed. This model also needs to be able to make sense of ‘third culture’.

Second, can we speak of a TCK identity given the fragmented and discontinuous nature of the third culture experience and the vast differences even among TCKs? Pearce calls ‘TCK’ a category “stretched beyond useful limits”<sup>102</sup> for analytical purposes. Given the diversity found in the subgroups of TCKs and the fluid nature of identity itself can TCKs be addressed as one group? Surprisingly, McCaig observes that “for many who have grown up globally, having their past validated and placed in the clear context of a shared heritage brings with it a stunning sense of safe homecoming”<sup>103</sup> indicating that it nevertheless is a powerful concept among those who identify with it. Any theological treatment of TCKs must acknowledge that ‘TCK’ is an artificially constructed category and that identification as a TCK is often intentional. The category of TCK is thus not only descriptive but

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<sup>101</sup> Richard Pearce, "Afterword," in *Migration, Diversity, and Education : Beyond Third Culture Kids*, ed. Saija Benjamin and Fred Dervin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 242.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>103</sup> Norma M. McCaig, "Foreword," in *Third Culture Kids : The Experience of Growing up among Worlds*, ed. David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken (London: Nicolas Brealey Pub. : Intercultural Press, 2001), xii.

also operative in that it shapes TCKs. Furthermore, a model for the identification with TCKs must be able to accommodate the diversity found within TCKs.

The question of a better model for culture will be addressed in chapter seven. The question of the diversity within TCKs will be addressed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Third Culture Kid Identity Development**

#### **Introduction**

In the first half of part one, I outlined a TCK profile. The latter half will be devoted to exploring the relation between identity development, spirituality, and specifically Christianity. In this chapter, I will examine one particular model of a secular TCK identity development which will serve to open up the discussion to the potential role that spirituality plays. Barbara Schaetti's model of TCK's identity development also allows for more variety in developmental outcomes among TCKs doing justice to the diversity found within TCKs.

#### **Developmental model of Third Culture Kid Identity**

Barbara Schaetti<sup>104</sup> describes TCK identity development in a way that does justice to the spectrum of outcomes. She acknowledges that "identity development is cyclical rather than linear, fluid rather than static, and multi-faceted rather than singular"<sup>105</sup> thus setting herself apart from other approaches that describe a single stereotypical outcome for all TCKs. Central to her identity development analysis is the concept of identity saliency. An identity (such a race, nationality, gender, third culture, etc.) might have low or high salience for TCKs. TCKs might even have multiple high salience identities arranged in a hierarchy, switched depending on the situation, or managed by a higher-order integrated principle. What makes Schaetti most interesting and relevant to this project is her discovery of a link between a higher-order integrated self-concept and a non-contingent spiritual dimension of belonging.

#### **Four Developmental Transactions of Third Culture Kid Identity**

Schaetti describes TCK identity development along the following four transactions:

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<sup>104</sup> Barbara F. Schaetti, "Phoenix Rising: A Question of Cultural Identity," in *Strangers at Home: Essays on the Effects of Living Overseas and Coming "Home" to a Strange Land*, ed. Carolyn Smith (Bayside, New York: Aletheia Publications, 1996); Schaetti and Ramsey, "The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality."; Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model."; "Attachment Theory: A View into the Global Nomad Experience," in *Military Brats and Other Global Nomads : Growing up in Organizational Families*, ed. Morten G. Ender (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002).

<sup>105</sup> "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 37.

repatriation, nationality, difference, and plurality.<sup>106</sup> She defines these transactions as “an interactive process between the individual global nomad and his or her lived experience such that the individual achieves new levels of clarity and integration.”<sup>107</sup> TCKs develop a sense of who they are by resolving the developmental tasks these transactions entail. Each transaction has a variety of identity development outcomes that the same person might adopt during various stages in their life, thus signifying a spectrum of responses to the third culture upbringing as well as different stages of a continuing process of identity exploration and recycling.

### 1. Repatriation

A defining characteristic of TCKs distinguishing them from immigrants is the expected repatriation of the family. Repatriation, from host to home culture or from third culture environment to monocultural environment, often functions as a moment of truth for TCKs with different resulting attitudes.<sup>108</sup> Especially among recently repatriated TCKs the uprooting experience can be “painful and create a profound sense of isolation.”<sup>109</sup> Some feel excluded from social groups, feeling “at home nowhere” and some develop a global identity that makes them feel “at home everywhere.”<sup>110</sup>

Schaetti gives three potential resolutions to the transaction of repatriation: homecomer, stranger, and cosmopolite.<sup>111</sup> For the homecomer, the repatriation is a welcomed move that results in a reaffirmed sense of belonging. In contrast, during childhood the majority of TCKs resolve the transaction as strangers: expecting to return home but finding that they do not actually belong. However, later in life TCKs are more likely to become cosmopolites. Cosmopolites have no expectation of fitting in to begin with and find themselves at home in multiple places. This often dramatic repatriation sets in motion the TCK’s quest for identity and is intimately tied to the other three transactions.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 84 - 113.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>108</sup> Nan M. Sussman, "The Dynamic Nature of Cultural Identity Throughout Cultural Transitions: Why Home Is Not So Sweet," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 4, no. 4 (2000); "Testing the Cultural Identity Model of the Cultural Transition Cycle: Sojourners Return Home," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 26, no. 4 (2002).

<sup>109</sup> Cottrell, "ATCKs Have Problems Relating to Own Ethnic Groups," par. 11.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 88 - 90.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 90.

## 2. Nationality

Nationality is a central yet ambiguous theme among TCKs. As “little ambassadors”<sup>113</sup> TCKs are always reminded of their passport country when in the host country. The passport is the most important identification document for the expatriate and host nationals categorize expatriates accordingly. However, simultaneously, nationality is for many TCKs “relatively uninformative as a cultural descriptor”<sup>114</sup> as they often experience their passport country only indirectly through their parents or artificially through their education.<sup>115</sup> This points to a foreclosed and untested national identity for the TCK pre-repatriation.

The concept of nationality and a salient national identity itself is not without difficulty. H. Ned Seelye and Jacquelin Howell Wasileski argue that the idea of the modern nation state only solidified by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>116</sup> It is a convenient yet simplistic way of identification that gives people “the illusion of having roots.”<sup>117</sup> Nationhood is a notion that “typically assumes that a nation consists of one people, indivisible, with shared values, speaking one common language, and occupying one clearly bound and mostly contiguous piece of real estate”<sup>118</sup> when in fact such unity and uniformity does not exist. National consciousness thus relies on assumptions of solidarity. As such, Benedict Anderson argues that nations are powerful ‘imagined communities’ which are socially constructed.<sup>119</sup>

Schaetti also comments that nationality is an artificial construct which, however, has real world consequences especially for TCKs and is used “to include and exclude, to determine access to power and privilege or even simply to basic needs.”<sup>120</sup> The powerful and real life consequences of the construct of nationality and national consciousness can easily be witnessed at such events as the Olympic Games where spectators sense a strong emotional but ultimately imagined solidarity with athletes with whom they might have little in common besides citizenship.

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<sup>113</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 15.

<sup>114</sup> Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 91.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>116</sup> H. Ned Seelye and Jacqueline Howell Wasilewski, *Between Cultures: Developing Self-Identity in a World of Diversity* (Chicago: NTC Pub. Group, 1996), 26 - 30.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>119</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 1991).

<sup>120</sup> Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 21.

Further exploring the real world consequences of national consciousness, Seelye and Wasileski suggest that “[n]ation-states impose borders on the map and matching borders on the mind.”<sup>121</sup> Arbitrary naive solidarity thus invites equally arbitrary and crude inclusion and exclusion. This stands in direct contrast with TCKs who grow up and often develop a sense of nationality with stretched, overlapping or fuzzy boundaries. Carolyn Smith has named this loosened sense of national identity “Rubber-Band Nationality.”<sup>122</sup> Thus, TCKs perceive of nationality identity flexibly and develop a variety of responses to the transaction of nationality. Schaetti agrees with this non-static view of nationality and favours the idea of national identity recycling.<sup>123</sup> Becoming aware of the social construction of nationality by experiencing first-hand the arbitrariness of exclusion and inclusion based on citizenship opens up the possibility of exploring nationality extremely flexibly.

Schaetti suggests three possible resolutions to the question of nationality: insular national identity, international national identity, and transnational national identity.<sup>124</sup> Insular national identity conforms to the above quoted rigid and homogenous notion of nationhood. Although unlikely as an identity outcome, Schaetti argues that TCKs can temporarily develop an ethnocentric insular national identity when first confronted with the host nation and before entering an identity moratorium.<sup>125</sup> Repatriation calls this insular national identity in question and typically results in the development of either an international or transnational national identity.<sup>126</sup> An international national identity maintains a primary but non-exclusive allegiance to one particular country that is open to the incorporation of foreign elements. A transnational national identity, on the other hand, regards nationality purely as a matter of function and does not claim any allegiance to a specific nation. The primary identification for this group lies with the third culture. Transnational TCKs find themselves occupying dynamic borderlands.<sup>127</sup> It is important to note, however, that “a transnational identity does not preclude a sense of responsibility for the actions taken by the passport country”<sup>128</sup> meaning that

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<sup>121</sup> Seelye and Wasilewski, *Between Cultures: Developing Self-Identity in a World of Diversity*, 29.

<sup>122</sup> Smith, "World Citizens and "Rubber-Band Nationality".

<sup>123</sup> Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 99.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 96 - 99.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 98 - 99.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

transnationals are not necessarily opposed to committing to the improvement of communities and/or countries.

### 3. Difference

TCKs have to come to terms with difference and marginality. This can include appearance, behaviour, language, as well as cultural norms and values and can be experienced positively as a privilege or negatively in the form of marginalization. While reaching across differences to connect with others such as host nationals is part and parcel of being a TCK, difference or marginality is actually the “primary source of commonality” among TCKs.<sup>129</sup> Underlying TCKs’ sense of marginality is the experience of simultaneously being ‘both a part of and apart from’ and yet also neither completely a part of nor completely apart from the cultural mainstream.<sup>130</sup>

Schaetti observes three possible outcomes to this transaction: Rejection of difference, terminal uniqueness, and normalizing difference.<sup>131</sup> Repatriated TCKs faced with difference might opt to hide that which sets them apart from their monocultural peers, either successfully setting aside their international experience permanently or living a life as a “hidden immigrant.”<sup>132</sup> Others are overwhelmed by the experience of difference and become paralyzed by it. Encapsulated by their marginality, these TCKs see themselves as terminally unique and alone in their experience of difference. Finally, some TCKs actively retain their difference as a valuable characteristic of who they are. Rather than feeling isolated, these TCKs transact marginality constructively and choose to “maintain a life-long awareness of difference.”<sup>133</sup>

David Pollock likens this last resolution of the transaction of difference to Hans Christian Anderson’s story of the ugly duckling writing that “[a]ll global nomads are not alike. They do not fit perfectly into a mold. But all global nomads need to know that it is all right to be a ‘swan’ moving among other valuable creatures

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 101 -04.

<sup>132</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 55. David C. Pollock, "Where Will I Build My Nest? The Multicultural Third Culture Kid," in *Strangers at Home. Essays on the Effects of Living Overseas and Coming "Home" to a Strange Land*, ed. Carolyn D. Smith (Bayside, New York: Alethaei Publications, 1996), 210.

<sup>133</sup> Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 104.



such as ‘ducks’.”<sup>134</sup> Pollock believes that through accepting one’s uniqueness and discovering a third culture reference group, the TCK experience becomes normal and valid.<sup>135</sup> Ruth Hill Useem and Ann Baker Cottrell’s research also indicates that the majority of TCKs “feel enriched by their third culture childhood”<sup>136</sup> and thus have learned to resolve marginality constructively by normalizing difference.

#### 4. Plurality

Schaetti argues that through their cross-cultural experience TCKs are faced with the transaction of plurality. She writes that TCKs are “exposed from their earliest days to a constantly changing world in which contradictory realities are simultaneously true.”<sup>137</sup> This can involve language, cultural values, education, or more concretely how two countries perceive one historical event radically differently.<sup>138</sup>

Simultaneously, TCKs have to realize that their “way of *being* necessarily takes on a multiplistic hue.”<sup>139</sup> Pollock and Van Reken elaborate writing that “TCKs not only have to learn new cultural rules, but more fundamentally they must understand who they *are* in relationship to the surrounding culture.”<sup>140</sup> Plurality is experienced externally as well as internally.

Pollock has proposed four categories to identify TCKs’ position relative to their surrounding: the mirror, the adopted, the hidden immigrant, and the foreigner.<sup>141</sup> The mirror looks alike and thinks alike in relation to the surrounding. The adopted looks different but thinks alike. This is typical of TCKs who remain an extended period of time in one host culture where appearance nevertheless sets them apart from the host population. The hidden immigrant looks alike but thinks differently and is characteristic of TCKs upon repatriation. Finally, the foreigner looks different and thinks differently. TCKs usually experience themselves as

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<sup>134</sup> David C. Pollock, “Swans, Ducks, and Other Valid Creatures,” in *Notes from a Traveling Childhood*, ed. Caren Curnow McCluskey (Washington, DC: Foreign Service Youth Foundation, 1994), 73 - 74.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 72 - 73.

<sup>136</sup> Useem and Cottrell, “Adult Third Culture Kids,” 34.

<sup>137</sup> Schaetti, “Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model,” 105.

<sup>138</sup> One example is the difference in how the USA views the dropping of nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during WWII and how Japan interprets the same incidents.

<sup>139</sup> Schaetti, “Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model,” 106.

<sup>140</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 56.

<sup>141</sup> Pollock, “Where Will I Build My Nest? The Multicultural Third Culture Kid.”

foreigners in the host country.<sup>142</sup> As cultural settings change TCKs jump categories and face new questions of who they are. The experience of plurality is thus also a contradiction within and extends to issues of personal identity, belonging, loyalty, values, and where or what 'home' is.

Schaetti categorizes four resolutions to the transaction of plurality: Dualism, multiplicity, relativism, and commitment within relativism.<sup>143</sup> Dualism resolves plurality with an either/or mindset and is an escape to the security of a singular truth. It entails an ethnocentric outlook on life. Multiplicity describes a state of being overwhelmed by demands of conflicting plurality to the extent that TCKs become paralyzed. This state can be described as a neither/nor mindset. Contextual relativism lets TCKs function by regarding all truth and action entirely dependent on the context and signifies a both/and mindset. Finally, Schaetti suggests that when TCKs continue to transact plurality they reach the stage of commitment within relativism.<sup>144</sup> She writes that "[g]lobal nomads who transact plurality to Commitment Within Relativism still know that truth is contextually relative but at the same time have developed a commitment to a personal set of higher-order values."<sup>145</sup> Schaetti has found that TCKs at the stage of commitment within relativism "have a solid central core belief"<sup>146</sup> which does not depend on the situation but lets them integrate their overall relative experience and actions. This stage can be described as both neither/nor and both/and since two sets of values are maintained. On the one hand, core beliefs which are independent of and transcend the immediate cultural situation are neither based on the host culture, nor based on the home culture. On the other hand, peripheral values based on the context are seen as relative and are based both on the host culture as well as home culture depending on what is called for.

### **Reference Group Orientation**

As these four transactions show, being exposed to a plurality of cultures and value systems and establishing different positions when acting within such systems during

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<sup>142</sup> See also: Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 54 - 56. Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 107.

<sup>143</sup> "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 110 -12.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 188.

the developmental years, the TCK “is likely to establish [multiple] foundational identities,”<sup>147</sup> meaning that the TCK simultaneously holds several high-salience identities that often contradict. TCKs would have to switch between identities raising issues of authenticity and compartmentalization. For Schaetti, the important question is whether TCKs can integrate these various salient identities to form a higher-order multicultural self that is more than the sum of its parts. Constructing this overarching self would render the issue of negotiating between competing identities and the issue of which of the many high salience identities are authentic moot.<sup>148</sup> Schaetti suggests that exploring TCKs as a reference group helps resolve these issues.

As TCKs become aware of their fact of experience through events such as repatriation and begin to explore the TCK reference group orientation, their experience of growing up between cultures is highlighted and validated. Schaetti writes that,

[t]he process of [reference group orientation] exploration directly influences individuals’ transaction of the four identity tasks. Validation of their fact of experience by virtue of both a reference group and a reference literature supports the individuals in transacting future repatriations as Cosmopolites, in transacting nationality to a balanced resolution of International or Transnational, in normalizing difference to a Constructive experience of marginality, and in articulating a Commitment Within Relativism.<sup>149</sup>

By intentionally identifying as a TCK, their resolutions are driven to a more cosmopolitan, global, constructive, and ethnorelative response.

### **Higher-Order Integration and Spiritual Dimension of Belonging**

Schaetti suggest two outcomes of this reference group orientation. TCKs “may articulate a personal hierarchy of salient identities or may express a more integrated higher-order identity.”<sup>150</sup> Those with multiple salient identities in a hierarchy are able to switch roles adjusting to the immediate situation. The roles remain somewhat compartmentalized and questions of authenticity still remain. A higher-order identity, on the other hand, resists fragmentation and positions the TCK on a different level at the intersection of all salient identities.

Interestingly, Schaetti observes that TCKs in her study who integrate their

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 203-04.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 227.

various salient identities were “those informed by more, more distinct, and less consistent cultural influences; their plurality was grounded in the culture general rather than the culture specific.”<sup>151</sup> The increased contradiction experienced discourages compartmentalization and encourages a more complex resolution “irreducible into its parts”<sup>152</sup> that raises the self to a higher level and results in more complex integration. Schaetti describes this position of identity resolution as “in-betweenness” and names the function of this higher-order identity “betweening.”<sup>153</sup> TCKs with a higher-order integrated identity transcend their immediate cultural contexts and define themselves between and beyond their various salient sub-identities.

Echoing Schaetti’s conclusions, Jutta König suggests that TCKs create a dialogical self, capable of achieving increasingly higher levels of novelty by sustaining dialogical relationships between conflicting cultural positions or voices in a field of tension.<sup>154</sup> The “multivoicedness” threatening the person with disintegration is reintegrated through a “voice on a higher, superordinate level [which] can bring together and organize a specific combination of voices at a lower, subordinate level.”<sup>155</sup> Similar to the commitment within relativism position, König thus also suggests that TCKs can develop a higher level, core identity that governs peripheral ethnorelative identities instead of a hierarchy of cultural identities.

What causes the difference between a hierarchy of multiple salient identities and a higher-order integrated identity for those with a TCK reference orientation? According to Anne Elizabeth Murase, those who have constructively dealt with conflicting plurality can be described as follows:

Undoubtedly their locus of integrity partially rested in a high degree of psychological integration. But beyond this these particular persons experienced a profound sense of what might be termed spiritual identity akin to the intimacy of creature and Creator (...) A spiritual ‘knowing and being known’ that is shared by the great traditions.<sup>156</sup>

The higher-order identity that integrates various conflicting aspects of the TCK is here closely linked with a spiritual identity. Schaetti also theorizes that “[d]eveloping, resolving, and expressing a multicultural self-concept (...) requires

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 248-49.

<sup>154</sup> König, "Moving Experience: Dialogues between Personal Cultural Positions."

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>156</sup> Anne Elizabeth Murase, "The Search for Identity," *Sophia International Review* 1 (1978).

the capacity to hold an internal rather than external point of reference for one's identity. The capacity to do so is based upon a non-contingent, overarching, and spiritual locus of integrity"<sup>157</sup> and concludes that "[a] preliminary correlation seems to exist between those whose experience of belonging were most clearly located within themselves and those whose negotiations of salience were rendered moot by their integrated, higher order expressions of identity."<sup>158</sup> TCKs who hold to internally localized spiritual values have a self-contingent experience of belonging and they develop the capacity to integrate their experience of marginality and plurality into an all-encompassing whole.<sup>159</sup>

In her conclusions, Schaetti makes the following suggestion for the people involved in raising and educating TCKs: "Help them hold and integrate the complexity of their experience by articulating a set of inner, core beliefs and / or spiritual practices which can serve them as an over-arching locus of integrity."<sup>160</sup> The argument is similar to the resolution of the transaction of plurality through the position of commitment within relativism: A commitment to a "personal set of higher-order values"<sup>161</sup> helps the TCK transact the conflicting cultural norms and values and the multiplicity of salient identities that the TCK build around those.

## **Conclusion**

Schaetti presents a developmental model of TCK identity that suggests overarching spiritual values at the core of TCKs help form a higher order integrated self-concept. The reason for this is because these spiritual values are not dependent on external cultural values which are relative. On a lower level, TCKs are able to function amidst conflicting values precisely because on a higher level there are unchanging core values independent of the changing situation. These spiritual core values are not values among other values but function on a different level thereby letting the TCK commit within relativism. Although only making reference to spirituality and not organized religion per se, Schaetti's model opens up the discussion of how religion and Christianity in particular can play a role in TCKs' sense of belonging and constructive identity. The religious exploration of TCK identity is thus not only

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<sup>157</sup> Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 58.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 204-05.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 111.

acceptable but also warranted.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Religion and Identity: The Case of Missionary Kids**

#### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter we have looked at Barbara Schaetti's argument that a higher order 'in-between' identity can be achieved through "a non-contingent, overarching, and spiritual locus of integrity."<sup>162</sup> This naturally leads to the question of how spirituality and religion might assist the development of TCKs' identity. As Missionary Kids (MKs) constitute a significant subgroup of TCKs, this chapter explores the role of religion in the development of identity and then takes a look at the case of MKs and their relation to Christianity in order to begin to explore how Christianity might help TCKs in developing their identity.

#### **Religion and Identity**

Religion is a double-edged sword: it can facilitate reconciliation and forgiveness<sup>163</sup> but also produce nationalistic, ethnocentric ideologies.<sup>164</sup> Kate A. Walters and Faith P. Auton-Cuff have researched the identity development among college-age female TCKs and list the stability of spirituality as one of the major factors that contributed to their identity development.<sup>165</sup> This serves as an example of how Christianity impacted the TCK's development in a positive way. They argue that the numerous transitions that TCKs experience cause disruption and discontinuities. In contrast, spirituality, defined here as a relationship with God in the context of Christianity, served to transcend these transitions and lend stability to TCKs.<sup>166</sup> Walters and Auton-Cuff write that "spirituality was an important component of identity development for these women. Their faith in God gave them a ground to stand on, and through that they were able to know who they were as Christians. It gave them an identity."<sup>167</sup> According to the authors, personal faith gives TCKs independence from the various beliefs of others. Thus, Christianity is named as a potentially

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>163</sup> E.g. the work of Archbishop Desmond Tutu through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

<sup>164</sup> E.g. German Christians during the Third Reich or the United Church of Christ in Japan during WW2.

<sup>165</sup> Kate A. Walters and Faith P. Auton-Cuff, "A Story to Tell: The Identity Development of Women Growing up as Third Culture Kids," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 12, no. 7 (2009).

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 763.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 763-64.

positive influence on TCK identity development.

Pamela Ebstyne King elaborates on the positive impact religion can have on identity formation in youth.<sup>168</sup> Although not specific to TCKs, King shows the potential of religion in the Judeo-Christian context to positively impact identity development. She understands identity formation as the two developmental tasks of locating oneself in something beyond the self and seeking one's sense of uniqueness and independence. According to King, "[a]t its best, religion offers both"<sup>169</sup> by providing three contexts: ideological, social, and spiritual.

First, the ideological context of religion provides meaning and perspective when resolving identity issues. King argues that "[r]eligion intentionally offers beliefs, moral codes, and values from which a young person can build a personal belief system. This worldview forms the cornerstone of a young person's individual sense of uniqueness and is an important aspect of his or her identity."<sup>170</sup> Religion is thus a source of potential core beliefs that the TCK can hold to.

Second, the social context of religion provides a community for the adolescents that helps sustain trustworthy relationships in which common goals and values can be fostered. King writes that "[t]rusting and sharing relationships have been shown to promote self-reflection and internalization of values, beliefs, and commitments that constitute identity."<sup>171</sup> The social context of religion might be less useful for the internationally mobile child who does not grow roots in one specific local community. However, on the other hand, in the case of Christianity similar communities that share basic beliefs can be found all over the globe and can be a form of continuity.

Finally, religion provides a spiritual dimension that lets the individual transcend the immediate context of the self and develop a sense of belonging to God as well as being related to God. King argues as follows:

Inherent within spirituality is the experience of transcending the self. Spirituality brings awareness of self in relationship to others. Engaging in the spiritual provides connectedness with divine, human or natural other (...). This moving beyond the self provides the opportunity for the search for meaning and belong that is central to the

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<sup>168</sup> Pamela Ebstyne King, "Religion and Identity: The Role of Ideological, Social, and Spiritual Contexts," *Applied Developmental Science* 7, no. 3 (2003).

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 199.



task of identity exploration.<sup>172</sup>

Thus spirituality offers a transcendent, internal point of reference.

While King's findings are not specifically tailored for TCKs, her findings nevertheless support Schaetti's argument that spirituality impacts the identity formation to let the individual develop a higher-order overarching identity based on core beliefs and values held to be true regardless of the immediate situation. However, King is careful to point out that religion can benefit identity development but does not do so necessarily. For example, fundamentalist religiosity can "devalue the individuality of their members in order to elevate their ideology"<sup>173</sup> or elevate the individual to "promote a sense of narcissism, entitlement, and lack of connectedness and contribution to society."<sup>174</sup> A religiosity that promotes estrangement, nationalism, encapsulated marginality, and a dualistic worldview might give TCKs the limited comfort of a false sense of security, but ultimately contradicts the TCK's experience and hinders the actualization of his or her potential. The key question is whether a tailor-made form of Christianity can assist the TCK to transact the developmental tasks of repatriation as cosmopolite, nationality as international or transnational, difference as constructive, and plurality as commitment within relativism. What form of Christian spirituality serves TCKs identity realization is thus a key question to consider.

### **Missionary Kids and Religious Identity**

Analysing the special case of MKs will help explore the role of spirituality and Christianity in the broader context of TCKs. In a world of discontinuity and plurality, faith in one God, creator of all things, can be a great source of continuity and integration. The case of MKs thus serves to examine what strand of Christian spirituality emerges from a transcultural and internationally mobile upbringing.

Ruth Van Reken writes that in addition to transculturality and high mobility a third factor plays a dominant role in MKs' lives, namely being raised in a God-system.<sup>175</sup> She writes that "every circumstance of our lives as MKs—good and bad—happen within that framework, or under that umbrella, of faith in God and

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ruth E. Van Reken, "Healing the Wounded among Adult MKs," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 31 (1995).

Jesus Christ. This means that while some of our deepest foundational blessings come from this overlay, our pain issues are also inextricably interwoven with God.”<sup>176</sup> Any experience, positive or negative, is intimately intertwined with the MK’s perception of God. A positive view of God in the context of the TCK experience might encourage TCKs to adopt Christianity as their core personal belief system whereas a negative experience might result in the rejection of Christianity. For MKs, both affirmation and rejection of faith occur within the context of the TCK experience.

### **MKs’ Rejection of their Parents’ Faith**

While some MKs state that faith in God helped their identity development, others have chosen to reject their parents’ faith altogether. This section examines why MKs chose to leave their parents’ faith.

Nancy Henderson-James found that 53% of missionary kids from her 1993 study claimed to be religious, 23% claimed to not be religious at all, 18% did not answer the question, and 7% gave ambivalent answers.<sup>177</sup> Importantly, some participants in the study claimed not to be religious, but “spiritual” or still informed by the “values, morals, and sense of social justice” of their parents’ Christianity.<sup>178</sup> In addition, those under the category of ambivalent are also not unconnected with Christianity as some have “left, rejoined, and sometimes left the church again.”<sup>179</sup> In the words of one participant “[m]y current spirituality is less formal, but more global.” Thus some form of religion or spirituality played a role in the majority of MKs even if not explicitly part of an organized religion. Rejection of Christianity can in fact be a rejection of a particular church culture rather than rejection of spirituality or personal faith per se.

Henderson-James summarizes a number of factors that play a role in MKs being less religious than their parents. Among them are the following: the exposure to alternative cultures and belief systems and subsequent rejection of an exclusivist Christian faith, feelings of neglect through separation that lead to anger towards God in some and a sense of self-reliance in others, and the loss of stability in the host

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Nancy Henderson-James, "The Religious Lives of Adult Missionary Kids," in *Writing out of Limbo: International Childhoods, Global Nomads and Third Culture Kids*, ed. Gene H. Bell-Villada, et al. (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2011), 232-33. Some of the percentage figures are rounded up and therefore add up to 101%.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 239-41.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 242.

culture during repatriation that led to questioning of faith.<sup>180</sup> Overall, however, the study confirms that MKs continue to value spirituality and maintain personal core beliefs.

Van Reken has elaborated on the fact that some have become disillusioned with organized religion and particular forms that churches take in cultural contexts.<sup>181</sup> Speaking from experience, Van Reken explains that MKs see Christianity contextualized in various cultures. She writes that “shared core values will be lived out differently from one culture to another (...) How do you figure out what is faith and what is culture?”<sup>182</sup> Different worldviews result in different interpretations of the same scripture. Van Reken hits home when she writes:

How did I know which one to choose? These types of encounters ultimately shook me to the core of my faith. Again, this is a paradox, for while these problems made life confusing and difficult for some years, I finally had to determine whether I believed what I believe only because I'd been taught this way, or if, in fact, I believed because I truly *believe*. Whatever the final outcome of this process, it has lifelong consequences for the MK.<sup>183</sup>

In the context of the transaction of plurality, Van Reken describes a scenario of entrapment in multiplicity and finally a resolution through a commitment to personal truth that transcends the plurality. If belief in Christianity is seen as part of the relativity of culture it fails to serve as an overarching spiritual locus and becomes one relative point of view among many others. The experience of plurality and relativity can thus become a stumbling block for MKs if Christianity is perceived that way.

Equally shocking to the MK, Van Reken names the confrontation with ethnocentric Christianity in the home culture as a cause of struggle.<sup>184</sup> While MKs are often used to living in multinational, racially, linguistically, and cultural diverse missionary organizations, their home churches might lack such diversity and have a much less global outlook. One of the reasons for leaving the church is thus that MKs cannot find a faith community with a wider, more global worldview. Especially for MKs who tend to be cosmopolitan, transnational, ethnorelative, and worldminded,

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 244-45.

<sup>181</sup> Ruth E. Van Reken, "Religious Culture Shock," in *Strangers at Home: Essays on the Effects of Living Overseas and Coming "Home" to a Strange Land*, ed. Carolyn D. Smith (Bayside, NY: Aletheia Publications, 1996).

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 90.

the encounter with ethnocentric and nationalistic churches leaves a negative impression of Christianity.

Robin M. Kietzman et al have elaborated on the emotional issues such as anger towards God and the loss of stability that cause spiritual struggles among MKs.<sup>185</sup> The study confirms that besides transculturality and mobility, an all pervasive faith system influenced the MK's response to their parents' religious tradition. The parent-MK relationship is a dominant factor in how MKs perceive Christianity and God as the MK's parents' decisions to live cross-cultural and internationally mobile lives are religiously motivated. The authors of the study state that "[t]he parenting characteristic that seemed to be most impacting and relevant to the question of the participants' struggle with faith was that of *disengagement*, a passive neglect of the children by their parents."<sup>186</sup> The trauma of being separated from parents due to boarding school, the feeling that host nationals received more attention than the MKs, the abuse by fellow missionaries or dorm parents, or the instability of mobility, and finally being reassured that it was a necessary sacrifice in the name of God led some MKs to conclude that "God, the Trinity, and Jesus in particular, [were] the chief agent of [their] destruction."<sup>187</sup> The pain caused by their parents' choice of lifestyle and the optimistic thinking by parents' that "since they were doing God's work, God would take care of their children"<sup>188</sup> shaped the MK's view of God as an uncaring sadistic being who is punishing them.

In conclusion, we can give some broad answers to why MKs choose to reject their parent's faith even though spirituality plays such a crucial role in the lives and identities of MKs. Some MKs are unable to see God but through their parents' context. God remains the God of someone else. The culturally contextualized strand of Christianity remains that of the host culture, their parent's mission society, or their often ethnocentric home churches. As long as these MKs cannot make sense of Christianity in the context of their own experience, their global outlook as well as their experience of loss and pain, MKs cannot adopt faith in God as part of their core personal belief that helps develop their higher-order identity, transacts plurality through commitment within relativism, and marginality as constructive.

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<sup>185</sup> Robin M. Kietzman et al., "The Lost MK: A Qualitative Study Exploring the Choice of Some Adult Missionary Kids to Leave Their Parents' Faith," *Missiology* 36, no. 4 (2008).

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 462.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 646.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 463.

One especially dominant factor in MKs' spiritual lives is the pain they experience and seek to make sense of but not always succeed. Van Reken summarizes the MK's dilemma:

[A]dult MKs face two possible outcomes: First, to maintain faith, they must deny any pain from their childhoods. But then unresolved grief surfaces in other ways, such as anger and depression. Some adult MKs actually do feel like they are God's victims. Second, if in the face of pain and unresolved questions, they abandon their faith, then they lose the very one who is willing to listen to their questions and pain, and to heal them.<sup>189</sup>

If MKs are unable to find a sophisticated enough faith in God that is able to make sense of their extraordinary situation, then Christianity remains alien to them and MKs are trapped in a false dualism between either denying their painful experience or denying their faith in God. That this is a real problem is affirmed by the MK CART/CORE study of adult MKs' well-being which confirms that 29% of respondents have received some form of professional counselling, and in addition 20% feel the need of such counselling.<sup>190</sup> However, the study also concludes that "most MKs can be expected to do very well spiritually as adults"<sup>191</sup> indicating that faith and spirituality are ascribed positive roles as TCKs resolve their identity development transactions more positively.

Having surveyed some of the obstacles that MKs experience when it comes to developing personal core beliefs based on Christianity, it is now time to turn to constructive and unique approaches to making sense of TCKs' transcultural, internationally mobile upbringing within the context of Christianity.

### **Progress in MK Research**

While for a long time, MKs were virtually unrecognized as a group worthy to be studied, this changed significantly in the 1980s. The new interest in MKs sought to clarify their legitimate place within Christianity and within the world.

Joyce Bowers writes that "[d]uring the 1970s, issues of [missionary] family dynamics became a new focus in Christian circles. It became acceptable for people to talk about their emotional wounds and to seek healing."<sup>192</sup> This led to three

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<sup>189</sup> Van Reken, "Healing the Wounded among Adult MKs," 433.

<sup>190</sup> Leslie A. Andrews, "The Measurement of Adult MKs' Well-Being," *ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 426.

<sup>192</sup> Joyce M. Bowers, "Looking Back, Pressing Forward: The Legacy of the ICMKs," in *Raising Resilient MKs: Resources for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers*, ed. Joyce M. Bowers (Colorado Springs, CO: Association of Christian Schools International, 1998), 2.

ground-breaking conferences in the 1980s held solely for the purpose of better understanding MKs. The first International Conference on Missionary Kids (ICMK) was held in Manila in 1984.<sup>193</sup> Bowers comments that “[n]ever before had there been a broad-based public discussion of growing up in a multicultural environment. Awareness of missionary childhood experience as it shapes the way MKs function as adults was placed ‘on the map’ by ICMK Manila.”<sup>194</sup> The overwhelming success of ICMK Manila led to a second ICMK conference in Quito in 1987<sup>195</sup> and a third conference in Nairobi in 1989.<sup>196</sup> Thus the 1980s saw an explosion of research interest in MKs.<sup>197</sup>

One significant development was the formation of the MK-CART/CORE<sup>198</sup> inter-mission research group in 1987 that conducted a study on the well-being of adult MKs<sup>199</sup> and sought to clarify the extend of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse and trauma among MKs as well as the long term effects of international childhoods on North American MKs. John Powell, one of the leaders behind the study, concludes that “research indicates that the majority of MKs have made faith in Christ their own, and are nurturing and personally integrating it. Most seem to recognize this as a life-long process and a significant number (36%) express it in Christian vocations. Some have rejected it, and still others struggle with aspects of it.”<sup>200</sup> Thus while remaining mainly optimistic about the faith of MKs the fact that some MKs reject their parents’ faith was also a point of focus.

Of interest to us is the question of how MKs found constructive ways of expressing their faith without denying their unique experience thereby allowing them

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<sup>193</sup> For a compendium of the conference see: Tetzl and Mortenson, *Compendium of the International Conference on Missionary Kids: New Directions in Missions: Implications for MKs, Manila, Philippines, November, 1984.*

<sup>194</sup> Bowers, "Looking Back, Pressing Forward: The Legacy of the ICMKs," 4.

<sup>195</sup> ICMK Quito 1987 produced two compendiums: Echerd and Arathoon, *Understanding and Nurturing the Missionary Family: Compendium of the International Conference on Missionary Kids: Quito, Ecuador, January 4-8, 1987. Planning for MK Nurture: Compendium of the International Conference on Missionary Kids: Quito, Ecuador, January 4-8, 1987.*

<sup>196</sup> Although no compendium was produced from ICMK Nairobi, the following book gathered several presentations from Nairobi (among others) and serves as a quasi-compendium: Bowers, *Raising Resilient MKs: Resources for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers.*

<sup>197</sup> John R. Powell, "Mk Research: Notes and Observations," in *Raising Resilient MKs: Resources for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers*, ed. Joyce M. Bowers (Colorado Springs, CO: Association of Christian Schools International, 1998).

<sup>198</sup> Missionary Kid-Consultation and Research Team / Committee on Research and Endowment.

<sup>199</sup> For some of the results see: Andrews, "The Measurement of Adult MKs' Well-Being." Powell, "MK Research: Notes and Observations." "Families in Missions: A Research Context," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 27, no. 2 (1999).

<sup>200</sup> "MK Research: Notes and Observations," 464.

to live out their spirituality healthily. Based on the three ICMKs, this particular question has been dealt with in two ways: first, in terms of the relevance of Christianity to the struggles of MKs and, second, in terms of a unique purpose MKs have within Christianity.

### **The Relevancy of Christian Faith and the Experience of being Known by God**

Alfredo Smith presents a constructive way of looking at the experience of MKs from a Christian perspective. His view is representative of other ICMK contributors' remarks. He suggests that loss of identity as well as construction of identity should be understood in the context of the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity.<sup>201</sup>

Smith sees the incarnation through the eyes of the MK who is similarly (mis-) placed, robbed of identity, and endures suffering. For Smith, Isaiah's suffering servant is "the greatest MK that ever set his foot in this world"<sup>202</sup> because experience of the suffering servant entailed an identity crisis, misunderstanding and rejection. Smith contrasts the various titles given in Isaiah 9 with the loss of form described in Isaiah 53. In the incarnation the rejected Son of God loses his rights and recognition in the eyes of humanity. In a similar way, MKs lose their status and identity when repatriating, entering an often unfamiliar world they had been taught to expect as their home. This description of the suffering servant and the incarnate Son resonates with the painful MK memories of expatriation, repatriation, separation, loss, and discrimination. From Smith's perspective every relocation is a re-enactment of the incarnation, the prototype of all relocations. To borrow A. N. Whitehead's phrase, God is here seen as "the great companion—the fellow-sufferer who understands."<sup>203</sup>

Michael G. Loftis takes this a step further. Himself an adult MK, he reflects on the value of growing up internationally and concludes:

I learned to be flexible. (...) to survive you have to grab [the new foreign culture], fall in love with it, and make it yours. God understands, He did it too. Kinship with Christ is a special benefit of missionary life. How must he have felt as he spoke to his own people who saw him only as a misfit, not as an emissary from the throne of heaven? Perhaps this is the greatest benefit and gift of being an MK, the opportunity

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<sup>201</sup> Alfredo Smith, "Jesus as an MK," in *Understanding and Nurturing the Missionary Family: Compendium of the International Conference on Missionary Kids: Quito, Ecuador, January 4-8, 1987*, ed. Pam Echerd and Alice Arathoon (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1989).

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>203</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality : An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Free Press, 1978), 351.

to gain a glimpse of God's world from his viewpoint.<sup>204</sup>

Not only is God the one who understands, Loftis claims that it is the MK who truly understands God. Thus the MK has a valuable and unique point of view: the MK is God's companion, the fellow sufferer who understands God! MKs can recognize God's salvific actions in their experience. God understands what it means to leave familiar worlds behind to face the unknown thereby losing one's identity and MKs understand what it meant for the second person to empty himself of divine form and be rejected.

Smith also puts the question of identity in the context of knowing and being known stating that "there's no such thing as identity when a man is not in Christ"<sup>205</sup> meaning that to have an identity is to be known by God. This closely resembles Anne Elizabeth Murase's remarks about a spiritual non-contingent core identity "akin to the intimacy of creature and Creator sung of by [David in Psalm 138]", also described as a "spiritual 'knowing and being known [by God]'. "<sup>206</sup> Being known by other people in the context of relative cultures constitute a contingent peripheral identity that may undergo frequent changes, whereas a core identity constituted by being known by God transcends the immediate cultural context and endures through changes and is thus non-contingent.<sup>207</sup>

To summarize, Smith suggests that Christianity is relevant to the MK experience and that MKs can recognize themselves in the incarnation and reversely see their experience as recognized by God. MKs can construct a core spiritual, non-contingent identity by internalizing the experience of being known and knowing God.

### **World Christians and the Transcultural Perspective of the Kingdom of God**

A second approach was presented by Ted Ward. The three ICMKs were brought to a close with a presentation by Ward that sought to sum up the significance of MKs for the future of Christianity.<sup>208</sup> Whereas Smith sought to help MKs find their place

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<sup>204</sup> Michael G Loftis, "The Real Value of Growing up Overseas," in *Raising Resilient MKs: Resources for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers*, ed. Joyce M. Bowers (Colorado Springs, CO: Association of Christian Schools International, 1998), 57.

<sup>205</sup> Smith, "Jesus as an MK," 45.

<sup>206</sup> Murase, "The Search for Identity," 25.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-25.

<sup>208</sup> Ted Ward, "ICMKs in Perspective: Deacons for the 21st Century," in *Raising Resilient MKs: Resources for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers*, ed. Joyce M. Bowers (Colorado Springs, CO: Association of Christian Schools International, 1998).



within the Christian faith by arguing for the relevance of Christianity to the MK experience, Ward does the same by arguing for the relevance of the MK experience to the church. The gist of his argument is an appeal to the purpose and value of the experience of MKs within the 21<sup>st</sup> century church.<sup>209</sup>

Ward argues that MKs are able to see things from three cultural contexts: That of the first (home culture), the second (host culture), and that of the third (transcultural perspective). He writes that “[t]he beauty of growing up overseas is a third cultural context that is actually a foretaste of what I see as twenty-first century Christianity.”<sup>210</sup> Ward stresses the need for ‘World Christians’, those whose commitment crosses national, ethnic, or racial lines, who are committed to Christian core values, and constitute an international community of the body of Christ.<sup>211</sup> Ward contrasts the “painfully monocultural [majority of North American churches]”<sup>212</sup> with the cultural flexibility exhibited by MKs. From his point of view, MKs are the antidote to Christian ethnocentrism, fear of foreign cultures that results in anger and hostility, cultural superiority syndrome which insists on always being right at the expense of others, and social distance and isolation that creates Christian ghettos.<sup>213</sup> It is the MKs ethnorelative perspective that Ward sees as necessary for the Christian church to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Ward makes this argument for the indispensable contribution of MKs as World Christians because he understands the kingdom of God to have a “transcultural perspective”<sup>214</sup> by which he means that “[t]he church must be in a culture, and yet the church must rise above culture.”<sup>215</sup> Undeniably, all human interaction takes place within and is conditioned by culture. However, a transcultural perspective offers people the awareness of how any interaction is conditioned by culture and enables people to transcend their own cultural conditioning and gain a critical perspective.<sup>216</sup> The transcultural perspective of MKs does not mean that MKs transcend culture in

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<sup>209</sup> This section relies mostly on two of Ted Ward’s presentations from ICMK Quito and ICMK Nairobi both of which can be found in: Bowers, *Raising Resilient MKs: Resources for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers*.

<sup>210</sup> Ward, "The MK's Advantage: Three Cultural Contexts," 66.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 66-68.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 68-69.

<sup>214</sup> "ICMKs in Perspective: Deacons for the 21st Century," 14.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Brian V. Hill, "Identifying Issues and Defining Terms," *ibid.* "Transcultural Education: A Model for Expatriates," in *Raising Resilient MKs: Resources for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers*, ed. Joyce M. Bowers (Colorado Springs, CO: Association of Christian Schools International, 1998).

general but that MKs recognize culture's relativity. The transcultural perspective of faith Ward advocates is thus an ethnorelative perspective critical of ethnocentric churches. Ward comments that:

Things aren't as they should be. Racism still infects the church. Racism still blights missions. It is an evidence of fallenness. Racism and cultural superiority—we politely call it ethnocentrism. But whether it is Americans who do it, or Chinese or Nigerians, it is evidence of fallenness and sin. (...) We have been called to be *different*!<sup>217</sup>

In the struggle against Christian forms of ethnocentrism, Ward sees MKs as potentially playing a prophetic role by embodying the transcultural perspective of the kingdom of God.

Ward reverses Smith's argument that Christian faith is relevant to the experience of MKs. Here, MKs' experience is relevant to the church. It is the church which requires someone with a perspective such as that of MKs to overcome its ethnocentrism and racism.

## **Conclusion**

Looking at the unique case of how MKs have, within the context of Christianity, processed their experience of international mobility shows that Christianity can indeed play a role in the development of a non-contingent spiritual core identity and that TCKs can value their transcultural perspective as not only compatible with Christianity, but indispensable to Christian faith. The experience of MKs is reflected in Christianity and their existence is validated. The ICMLKs show fruitful attempts to make sense of TCKs' experience, both positive as well as painful, within the context of Christianity. However, these attempts as seen in the three ICMKs are mostly devotional or pastoral. Although, as we can see in Ward, hints are made that go beyond merely offering Christian condolences in form of biblical illustrations to the hardships endured by MKs, these fall short of a systematic theological treatment. The ICMKs reveal the need to give this emerging group of people, MKs in particular and TCKs in general, proper theological attention and glimpses of how fruitful this attention might be.

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<sup>217</sup> Ted Ward, "ICMKs in Perspective: Deacons for the 21st Century," *ibid.*, 18.

## Chapter 6

### David Gibbons: Third Culture Church

#### Introduction

The International Conferences on Missionary Kids (IMCK) reviewed in the previous chapter attempted to make sense of the Missionary Kids' experience through Christianity by comparing the experience of the MKs with that of the incarnate Christ and by arguing that the global outlook and adaptability of MKs is essential to the church. This chapter looks at the work of David Gibbons who takes this a step further and presents a model of the church based on the boundary-crossing outlook of TCKs.<sup>218</sup> *The Monkey and the Fish* is a non-academic book mostly meant to inspire its readers to look beyond the confines of their homogenous churches rather than present a systematic theological treatment of TCKs and the church. However, Gibbons' book is significant because it is the only theological monologue I know of that specifically uses TCKs as a central theme. It acknowledges the pain involved in leaving one's comfort zone and focuses on the church's primary calling to love people who are culturally, ethnically, racially, or economically radically different.

#### 'God is Third Culture'

Gibbons starts out with a bold premise: "Those how follow Jesus embody fluidity, adaptation, and collaboration. It's what we call the third-culture way. Adaptable to changing circumstances. To challenging cultures. To complex crises and problems."<sup>219</sup> He furthermore states that "third culture is who God is. Jesus best embodied third culture when, as an 'outsider' yet still the Son of God, he chose to fully live in the world that would eventually crucify him."<sup>220</sup> In an even more revealing passage, Gibbons proclaims "[third culture] is at the core of the gospel and who we are called to become."<sup>221</sup> Gibbons, rather sensationally, declares, first, that third culture describes who God is, and, second, that all Christians, regardless of their upbringing, ought to adopt a third culture outlook.

Third culture for Gibbons means the ability to adapt and be sensitive to other

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<sup>218</sup> Gibbons, *The Monkey and the Fish : Liquid Leadership for a Third-Culture Church*.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 21.

cultures<sup>222</sup> and a key metaphor he employs to describe third culture is liquidity.<sup>223</sup> Furthermore, Gibbons stresses two points: First, third culture embraces one's pain and that of the other to create a connection and, second, it extends generosity to the other across differences. In the context of the church, third culture means "the mindset and will to love, learn, and serve in any culture, even in the midst of pain and discomfort."<sup>224</sup> Pain is thus a central theme in Gibbons third culture theology.

Pain is significant in two ways. First, Gibbons advocates the "pain principle".<sup>225</sup> Painful experiences can have the effect of deconstructing people to "[the] most genuine, humble, authentic selves."<sup>226</sup> Pain reveals the raw humanity that lies beneath constructed superficial identities meant to mask the person. Additionally, pain is universal and serves to connect people more intimately compared to success and triumphs. In reaching across differences, one's experience of pain and loss is beneficial in understanding the radically different other. Second, pain accompanies reconciliation across differences: "Third culture is the gift of being more cognizant of and more comfortable with the painful fusion and friction inherent in cultural intersections."<sup>227</sup> True reconciliation requires the painful act of stepping out of one's comfort zone to encounter the other on their terms. Thus, pain not only highlights our common humanity behind differences, it also accompanies this process of making peace with radically different others.

Extending generosity across differences even if this means risking pain goes hand in hand with what Gibbons calls the "theology of discomfort".<sup>228</sup> He writes:

If any word epitomizes Jesus' life, it's discomfort, from the beginning—his birth amid poverty (...)—to the end—his death, by the Via Dolorosa, full of shame, sacrifice, humility, pain, betrayal, and rejection.

Embracing a life of discomfort means venturing into places we don't feel like going, doing things we don't wish to do, being with people we don't feel comfortable being with, serving them, loving them, helping them—all of which demonstrates a not-of-this-world brand of love that is irresistible to all people in all places.<sup>229</sup>

The mandate to love one's radically different neighbour is thus described as an uncomfortable cross-cultural endeavour akin to Christ's passion. TCKs understand

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 92-93.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 75-80.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 78.

this pain and discomfort of facing the unknown other well. However, Gibbons argues all Christians are called to accept this discomfort and pain.

Underlying the painful embrace of the other is the celebration of difference. According to Gibbons “[t]hird culture actually enhances a culture’s uniqueness while at the same time celebrating the synergy of its fusion with other cultures. Third culture artfully flows in and out of multiple cultures like water.”<sup>230</sup> Gibbons sees potential in the coming together of differences while also protecting the integrity of these differences that give rise to this synergy. Third culture plays the role of a transcultural facilitator that moves around freely between different cultural positions affirming each.

### **Third Culture Church**

Gibbons criticises Christian ethnocentrism arguing that diversity within the church is essential for its well-being. He contrasts Donald McGavran’s concept of the “homogeneous unit principle”<sup>231</sup> with Frans Johansson’s Medici Effect.<sup>232</sup> The homogeneous unit principle states that people like to join churches without crossing racial, linguistic, cultural, or economic boundaries. It was originally intended to suggest that missionaries should not require believers to discard their own cultural heritage and adopt the culture of the missionary when becoming a Christian. However, according to Gibbons, the homogeneous unit principle that ‘like attracts like’ resulted instead in creating “church bubbles of homogeneous people”<sup>233</sup> who only minister to people of similar racial, ethnic, and economic background. Commenting on such homogeneous communities, Gibbons writes that “[w]e live under the illusion of a Herculean force. But what many people around the world see is a version of Christianity created in our own cultural image, a Christianity with diminishing power and influence and filled with a lot of pride, self-centredness, and wrongheaded metrics.”<sup>234</sup> In other words, Christian ethnocentrism that refuses to embrace different others is a destructive and sinful force in the church. Ethnocentric

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>231</sup> See Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, Lausanne Occasional Paper (LOP) 1 “The Pasadena Consultation—The Homogeneous Unit Principle,” based on a discussion held in 1977. Accessed September 1, 2015, <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lops/71-lop-1.html>.

<sup>232</sup> Frans Johansson, *The Medici Effect : What Elephants and Epidemics Can Teach Us About Innovation* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 2006).

<sup>233</sup> Gibbons, *The Monkey and the Fish : Liquid Leadership for a Third-Culture Church*, 76.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 22.

churches fail to protect diversity and seek the comfort of uniformity instead thereby setting up an illusionary ‘us versus them’ dualism that demonizes the culturally, ethnically, racially, and economically other.

In contrast, the Medici Effect, suggests that diversity drives innovation. Gibbons argues that the third culture church standing at the intersection of cultures is in an uncomfortable but better position to solve problems because of the Medici effect. Third culture church intentionally leaves the homogeneous, ethnocentric comfort zone behind to obey God’s commandment to love and serve the stranger and also to face the challenges of a racially, culturally, and economically diverse twenty-first century.<sup>235</sup>

Thus Gibbons’ vision of a third culture church is not an option but a mandate for all Christians. In order to follow Christ, believers have to adopt third culture and embrace the discomfort of making oneself vulnerable for the sake of serving the alien stranger. In Gibbons’ words, “our task is (...) to learn with the apostle ‘to be all things to all men.’ We need to learn to walk in the blur and in the intersections of cultures, to bust the walls that separate us from a world of colliding cultures and generations, and shifting of roles, responsibilities, and influence.”<sup>236</sup> The ethnocentric, homogeneous church is out of touch with the ethnorelative and thoroughly diverse world. By willingly placing itself in the midst of cultural conflict and lovingly embracing one’s neighbour even amid pain, the third culture church has the power to fulfil its calling of facilitating true reconciliation.

### **Criticism of David Gibbons’ Third Culture Church**

Although unique in its treatment of third culture and ecclesiology, Gibbons’ book is not without major problems. First and foremost, it lacks any systematic and rigorous theological analysis of third culture. Second, Gibbons’ definitions of key terms such as third culture are vague. For example, his claim that “God is third culture”<sup>237</sup> or “[third culture] is at the core of the gospel”<sup>238</sup> makes little sense beyond a vague impression that loving one’s culturally different neighbour is somehow divine. This brings us to a third weakness: Gibbons’ argument mostly consists of sporadic slogans

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 150-51.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 21.

mixed with anecdotes and poetic illustrations. The book lacks a coherent argument that would lend validity to the above mentioned vague claims about God and third culture. Overall, the book seems to work mostly as a means to inspire leaders who want to venture outside the church's self-imposed ethnocentric boundaries.

However, more from intuition than from logical argumentation, Gibbons seems to have stumbled upon an interesting group of people, TCKs, and recognized the powerful critique that their ethnorelative and transcultural position holds against Christian ethnocentrism. In bringing in TCKs to his discussion of what the church ought to be, Gibbons has made TCKs relevant beyond their peer group. Gibbons points out that something about this third culture resonates with aspects of Christian living, especially in a globalizing world and argues that TCKs' outlook is not only a curiosity but a necessity among Christians adapting to the state of the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### **Conclusion**

Gibbons's work is adequate as a guide for church leaders but falls short in terms of a systematic theological treatment of TCKs. However, Gibbons points in the right direction in that he makes the case that TCKs have a purpose in the church and that their experience is meaningful in the eyes of God. What Gibbons work offers is the idea that TCKs' outlook is a powerful position from which to critique an insular church culture and thereby relevant to the church in general and that the gospel can be described in terms that are familiar to TCKs. In this sense the ICMKs and Gibbons are in agreement.

### **Bringing Part One to a Close**

Chapters two and three served to introduce TCKs and explore some of the issues they face, foremost the question of belonging and identity. From this starting point part one looked at the question of TCKs and religion, specifically Christianity. First, chapter four makes the case that TCKs' identity development benefits from a spiritual, non-contingent locus of integrity that helps integrate their various experiences on a higher level. Next, chapter five looked at how a subgroup of TCKs, MKs, has incorporated Christian faith as their spiritual locus of integrity through recognizing relevancy and finding purpose. Finally, chapter six reviewed how David Gibbons advances this alliance between MKs and Christianity and places third

culture at the core of who the Christian God is as well as argues that TCKs' outlook is at the core of how the church ought to be.

This leaves us with two conclusions and one observation. First, Christian faith can play a positive role in the identity formation of TCKs and, second, TCKs are seen as having a positive contribution to make to Christianity. However, we can observe that although TCKs have enjoyed their well-deserved academic attention in such areas as education, cultural studies, sociology, and psychology, serious theological treatment of third culture which goes beyond popular piety is absent from this discussion.

The attempts by the ICMKs and David Gibbons fall short of a coherent and systematic theological treatment of this group. A Christian response to the experience of TCKs is not only necessary but also beneficial to the Christian church. The latter half of this dissertation seeks to present a contextualized theology from the perspective of TCKs to fill a neglected gap in scholarship. Two reasons justify this:

First, as Barbara Schaetti points out spirituality potentially plays a crucial role in TCK identity development. The ICMKs have partially answered that call to make sense of the TCK experience from a Christian point of view to assist TCKs in forming their core spiritual identity. The question of what resources Christianity has to offer to enable TCKs to develop their identity and thrive is thus a valid question.

Second, as Ted Ward's contribution to the ICMKs has outlined and Gibbons' work has sought to spell out, Christianity can benefit from a third culture point of view to resist Christian nationalism and ethnocentrism. TCKs' experience can highlight transcultural aspects of Christianity that have been neglected. Potentially fruitful results of the cross-pollination of TCKs and theology thus justify the contextualization of the TCK's experience within Christianity.

Important groundwork has been laid by the attempts of the ICMKs and Gibbons to view the TCK in terms of the suffering servant / incarnate Christ (the fellow sufferer who understands), the apostle Paul (who became all things to all people), and the Good Samaritan (extending generosity across boundaries). These unique efforts to look for points of contact between TCKs and Christianity are important. However, they fall short of a much needed rigorous and thorough theological treatment. The task of laying out a TCK theology asks for a robust framework which can benefit both TCKs and the field of theology. A systematic treatment touching on key aspects of Christian theology would be required to create



a coherent theological picture able to serve as an orientation for TCKs and the church in general.

Due to the transcultural perspective of TCKs, a theology of third culture would necessarily result in the following. First, it would be a theology highly critical of nationalism and nationalistic Christianity. Only a theology that can correct the fatal mistakes the German and Japanese churches made during the last century can be suitable for the church of this century. A TCK theology seeks to destroy arbitrary national identities in favour of a core Christian identity that can put all other peripheral identities into proper context. Second, a theology of third culture would be highly critical of ethnocentrism. Only an ethnorelative theological perspective which rises above cultural contradictions and rivalries can prevent attempts by dominant Christian groups to impose their culture on others. A TCK theology seeks to uphold cultural diversity since its theological identity requires it to stand at the very intersection of cultures and seeks to protect the integrity of the culturally powerless against cultural oppression. Third, unlike any other contextualized theologies which only take into account a single cultural context and are, therefore, inherently limited in its approach, a TCK theology would be a theology marked by transculturality which will firmly assist TCKs and others in developing their identity as mediators and reconcilers standing between different cultural perspectives. The core of a TCK theology, thus, is the validation of diversity and realization of reconciliation.

The outline of the project will be as follows. The first task will be to identify a reliable framework which clearly sets out what is meant by third culture and which is capable of acting as points of contact between TCKs and theology. Part two will look at transculturality, liminality, non-place, and constructive marginality through mediation in order to construct our conceptual tools to make sense of the experience of TCKs theologically. The second task, in part three, will be to creatively apply these key TCK-concepts to theology and create a Christian vision that will resonate with TCKs.

## **Part Two**

### **Conceptual Framework**

## **Chapter 7**

### **Transculturality and Third Culture Kids**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of part two (chapters 7 to 11) is to set forth a theoretical framework that will serve as the foundation for the theological application in part three. The key task is to find conceptual tools that highlight central aspects of TCKs. The concepts identified in this part will act as guiding themes in part three in order to create a high resonance between the experience of TCKs and the applied TCK theology.

This chapter begins the discussion by addressing the problematic essentialized notion of culture and presenting an alternative model of culture using Wolfgang Welsch's notion of culture as 'transculturality.' Next, chapter 8 presents Victor Turner's 'liminality' as the most central guiding theme for understanding TCKs as both 'neither/nor' and 'both/and'. Further adding to this central concept is the discussion of Marc Augé's concept of 'non-place' in chapter 9 and Zygmunt Bauman's 'liquid modernity' in chapter 10. Finally, chapter 11 discusses Janet M. Bennet's idea of 'constructive marginality' especially through acting as a mediating person.

The present chapter is roughly divided into two parts. First, it discusses the environment that gives birth to TCK as a mediating 'third culture'. Second, it discusses transculturality and how TCKs fit into this model of culture. The key question this chapter treats is how TCKs' third culture is related to other cultures as well as differs from other cultures.

#### **Origins of Third Culture**

How did third culture come into being and came to be described as a 'mediating third between two others'? According to David Pollock and Ruth Van Reken, the term 'third culture' was coined by Ruth Hill Useem and John Useem in the 1950s to describe the expatriate communities of Americans living and working in India.<sup>239</sup> The home or passport culture of the expatriates was defined as the first culture and the host culture that the expatriate family lived in was named the second culture. The Useems then identified the shared lifestyle of the expatriate community as an

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<sup>239</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 14.

interstitial culture, a culture between the first and second culture, and called it third culture.<sup>240</sup> Expatriate communities with different sponsors had their own peculiarities, but there evolved a shared mindset among expatriates different from both first and second culture.

### **Modern Third Culture as a Culture of Mediation**

The Useems and John Donoghue identified mediation as a key function of the third culture.<sup>241</sup> According to Ruth Hill Useem, a major shift in the relation among peoples of the world occurred in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>242</sup> The ending of colonialism, major progress in science and technology, and the emergence of two relatively new superpowers in the aftermath of the Second World War changed global dynamics. The Useems had been studying professionals supported by organizations which cross societal borders and engage in roles that relate two or more societies. In the late 1950s the Useems examined the third culture of Americans living and working in India primarily as diplomats, missionaries, technical aid workers, businessmen, educators, and media representatives and their accompanying dependents.

Useem et al originally defined third culture as “the complex of patterns learned and shared by communities of men stemming from both a Western and non-Western society who regularly interact as they relate their societies, or sections thereof, in the physical setting of a non-Western society.”<sup>243</sup> This third culture is not simply a fusion of two separate cultures but patterns of behaviour emerged around the crucial roles of cultural middlemen/women who mediate between societies and cultures. Thus, “as men continue to associate across societies while engaged in common enterprises, they incorporate into the ethos of the ingroup, standards for interpersonal behavior, work-related norms, codes of reciprocity, styles of life, networks of communication, institutional arrangements, world views, and on the individual level,

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ruth Hill Useem, John Useem, and John Donoghue, "Men in the Middle of the Third Culture: Roles of American and Non-Western People in Cross-Cultural Administration," *Human Organization* 22, no. 3 (1963).

<sup>242</sup> Ruth Hill Useem, "TCK 'Mother' Pens History of Field," *NewsLinks* vol. xii, no. 3 (1993).

<sup>243</sup> Useem, Useem, and Donoghue, "Men in the Middle of the Third Culture: Roles of American and Non-Western People in Cross-Cultural Administration," 170.

*new types of selves.*”<sup>244</sup> This new type of self is neither a part of the host nor of the home society but is unique to the members involved in mediation across differences.

Unlike the earlier colonial third culture that was based on superordination of Western society and subordination of non-Western society, modern third cultures were based on coordinate relations, meaning that each side had the authority to initiate or terminate the enterprise. The vast differences prevailing between the two culture systems required sensitivity on both sides in order to successfully fulfil the function of the third culture in the post-colonial setting.<sup>245</sup> Useem et al likened the third culture and the members of both home and host society whose behaviour is organized by it to “a bridge between societies”<sup>246</sup> meant to overcome differences for the benefit of both parties.

Two characteristics of these so called ‘men in the middle’ are emphasized: First, they are not just individuals from different societies relating themselves personally to each other but are *representatives* relating societies to each other. This is primarily done through personal interaction, through the organizational structures that the third culture establishes, and the cultural patterns as mediators that ‘men in the middle’ create, learn, and share.<sup>247</sup> Second, third culture and its members are marked by *high mobility and change*. People constantly flow in and out of the third culture communities.

These mediating characteristics are not limited to the American expatriate community but are common to all third culture communities. The significance of the third cultures that Useem et al saw emerging not only in India but all over the world are boldly proclaimed. They argue as follows:

In terms of the evolution of human societies, and especially the developing non-Western societies, we propose that future “civilized” nation-states will be characterized by those of high access to and creative participation in the emergent worldwide third cultures. Our future “primitives” will consists of those societies (...) which reject or are cut off from the mainstreams of the world-encompassing third culture.<sup>248</sup>

What Useem et al saw occurring locally, they ascribe global importance to. In a world filled with diversity where the smooth exchange of people, commodities, and

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 178.

information is indispensable to survival and flourishing, third cultures and ‘men in the middle’ seek to bridge the gulf between different groups of people.

Thus, the third culture which emerged as a result of the increased interaction between peoples is, first and foremost, a mediating culture with its own complex of patterns that are different from both the home and host culture. Ann Baker Cottrell adds that third culture is “a culture created at the interstices of societies, by people who mediate. It is a bridging culture which obviously reflects the participants’ cultures (first and second). It transcends those cultures; it is *not a blended culture*.”<sup>249</sup> While maintaining that there is an underlying unity to all third cultures as mediating cultures that transcend both home and host culture, Cottrell also points out that some of the shapes and forms that this mediating third culture takes are determined by the nature of the first and second cultures. However, Cottrell stresses that third culture is not merely an aggregate of cultural elements but somehow transcends the local particularities.

### **Current Third Culture**

While John Useem went on to study how expatriate adults interact with members of the host society, Ruth Hill Useem became interested in the common characteristics among those who grow up in this third culture and whom she subsequently named “third culture kids.”<sup>250</sup> Whereas previously the focus was on the created and shared patterns of expatriate professionals in their endeavour to fulfil their sponsoring organizations purpose, the focus shifted to how those whose primary socialization takes place within the context of this unique lifestyle embodied the third culture. The question thus changed from “How do I accomplish my task as a person in the middle?” to “Who am I as a third culture kid?”

Another shift occurred in the third culture communities themselves. Whereas modern third cultures tended to be sustained within an expatriate community compound, this is less the case in current third cultures. Instead of emphasizing third culture as a culture of a certain space such as a military base, missionary compound, or boarding school, it has come to mean a certain outlook on life that the shared experience of growing up between cultures creates. Pollock and Van Reken ask if

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<sup>249</sup> Cottrell, "Explaining Differences: TCKs and Other CCKs, American and Japanese TCKs," 61.

<sup>250</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 15.

this renders the “culture” in third culture meaningless since people who share these patterns of behaviour do not physically live together.<sup>251</sup> Laura Cockburn responds that even though expatriate families tend to be more independent than before, “the concept of this 'third culture' would still seem to be appropriate in terms of defining a particular group of people who have a *shared experience*.”<sup>252</sup> The definition of third culture thus changed to mean the lifestyle created, shared, and learned by those who are from one culture and in the process of relating to another one.<sup>253</sup> In spite of the diversity in terms of first and second culture or sponsoring organization, TCKs share a remarkably important and similar life experience by living in and among different cultures during their developmental years regardless of whether this took place in a specific expatriate community. The third culture as a meaning sustaining system can thus be thought of independently from a physical place and is instead grounded in shared experience.

TCKs who embody the third culture specifically share two experiences with all other TCKs.<sup>254</sup> First, TCKs experience growing up in a genuinely cross-cultural world, mediating and negotiating differences. Adult expatriates mediate externally as their main concern is the task at hand. In contrast, TCKs have internalized the cross-cultural experience and thus attempt to answer the question of cultural identity. Second, TCKs are raised in a highly mobile world. TCKs’ question of cultural identity must be asked anew with every relative change.

### **Dynamics of Third Culture**

Growing up in the third culture, a culture different from both the host as well as the passport culture which nevertheless is influenced by the interaction and relation between the two cultural domains, gives rise to paradoxical statements about belonging that reflect the in-between state of TCKs. Two statements suffice to illustrate the complexity of the situation. First, Useem and Cottrell suggest that TCKs are simultaneously “at home everywhere and nowhere.”<sup>255</sup> Furthermore, Useem and Downie argue that TCKs become simultaneously “both a part of and

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>252</sup> Cockburn, "Children and Young People Living in Changing Worlds," 477. Emphasis added.

<sup>253</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 16.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>255</sup> Useem and Cottrell, "Adult Third Culture Kids," 32-33.

apart from”<sup>256</sup> the situation that they find themselves in. These seemingly paradoxical statements point to the fact that TCKs cannot be properly defined simply as those belonging to the third culture as if the third culture is a culture among cultures akin to the passport or host culture. The third culture might be similar to e.g. German culture or Japanese culture as a lifestyle created, learned, and shared among its members. However, since it is cultivated on the border or in the middle, it can only be understood in terms of its own dynamics in contrast to conventional understandings of culture.

Useem and Cottrell argue that TCKs find themselves at ‘home everywhere’ because TCKs are comfortable in foreign settings and are more likely to be able to “relate to anyone, regardless of differences such as race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality”<sup>257</sup> than their non-TCK peers. Two aspects need to be distinguished. First, the statement applies in so far as TCKs build relationships to both passport and host countries. For example, persons who have grown up mediating between German and Japanese culture find themselves at home to some extent in both German and Japanese cultures and might well be able to function perfectly in both settings. Similar to biculturality, TCKs can thus fit into categories of ‘both/and.’

Remarkably, Useem and Cottrell go beyond this sense of feeling at home in only the countries that are mediated in the context of the TCK's immediate third culture. Thus, second, the statement can apply to any culture which TCKs find themselves in. In this sense, ‘feeling at home everywhere’ indicates that TCKs can feel authentic regardless of the physical location they find themselves in because, paradoxically, it is the experience of ‘not being at home’ that feels familiar and comfortable and thus creates the sense of being at home. TCKs can also find themselves at home anywhere in the sense that they can relate to the common humanity of the others.

On the flip side, being at home nowhere, according to Useem and Cottrell, is the result of TCKs' realization that they differ significantly from their non-TCK peers in their passport or host cultures. Useem and Cottrell are quick to point out that this does not necessarily imply isolation or alienation. Rather, it suggests that TCKs

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<sup>256</sup> Ruth Hill Useem and Richard D. Downie, "Third-Culture Kids," in *Writing out of Limbo: International Childhoods, Global Nomads and Third Culture Kids*, ed. Gene H. Bell-Villada and Nina Sichel (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2011), 22.

<sup>257</sup> Useem and Cottrell, "Adult Third Culture Kids," 33.



develop a “global identity”<sup>258</sup> which is fundamentally different from an ethnocentric identity. Belonging to the third culture is precisely what does not let TCKs fully and simply identify with either passport or host cultures. In this sense, TCKs fall into the category of ‘neither/nor.’

Analogously, Useem and Downie argue that TCKs are described as being ‘a part of’ each culture that they relate to.<sup>259</sup> Since humans are bound to express themselves in some cultural form or another, TCKs cannot escape their cultural influences. Even though third culture does not have a language it calls its own nor certain rituals or norms, TCKs always speak in some language and always employ some cultural forms in expressing themselves. Even though third culture does not have a geographical territory it calls its own, TCKs always find themselves in a certain space at a certain time. Inevitably TCKs become and are a part of the cultures that they mediate between.

Simultaneously, Useem and Downie suggest that we cannot give a full account of TCKs without also speaking of how they are ‘apart from’ their immediate cultural context. It does not mean that TCKs can escape being cultural. However, in terms of belonging to third culture which is neither this culture nor that culture, in a sense, TCKs always remain foreign to their immediate cultural context. Instead, it is primarily the shared experience that can make sense of who TCKs are and thus give meaning to TCKs.

Thus, the dynamics of third culture cannot be described in terms of exclusive and ethnocentric ‘either/or’ categories nor can they be described only in terms of multiple ‘both/and’ categories as in bi- or multi-culturalism. What Useem, Cottrell and Downie seem to point to is the fact that TCKs can only be described in terms of both ‘both/and’ and ‘neither/nor.’ Thus, for example, a TCK growing up in both Germany and Japan is both German and Japanese in one sense and neither German nor Japanese in another sense.

TCK Alex Graham James’ poem titled *Uniquely Me* expresses this dynamic well:

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Useem and Downie, "Third-Culture Kids," 22.

I am  
 a confusion of cultures.  
 Uniquely me.  
 I think this is good  
 because I can  
 understand  
 the traveller, sojourner, foreigner,  
 the homesickness  
 that comes.  
 I think this is also bad  
 because I cannot be understood  
 by the person who has shown and grown in one place.  
 They know not  
 the real meaning of homesickness  
 that hits me  
 now and then.  
 Sometimes I despair of  
 understanding them.  
 I am  
 an island  
 and  
 a United Nations.  
 Who can recognize either in me but God?<sup>260</sup>

In Graham James' words, the dynamics of third culture can only be expressed using both the metaphor of an island (different and separate from all) and that of the United Nations (incorporating all) and interestingly adds a religious perspective to third culture in the last line.

There is thus a local dimension firmly grounded in the cultures surrounding the TCK as well as a global dimension that views all of these as relative and none of these as sufficient to fully express and give meaning to TCKs. The two dimensions need to remain in tension to give a full account of people in third culture. It is in the 'in-between' of simultaneously being local and global, feeling at home and not at home, and being a part of and apart from that third culture can be fully understood.

### **Third Culture and Transculturality**

Third Culture cannot be adequately understood as another culture among other cultures and yet is related to other cultures. Nina Richter has contributed to the discussion of third culture by introducing Wolfgang Welsch's idea of transculturality to better accommodate the idea of a culture spanning cultures.<sup>261</sup> According to

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<sup>260</sup> Alex Graham James, "Uniquely Me," in *Scamps, Scholars, and Saints : An Anthology of Anecdotes, Reflections, Poems and Drawings by Third Culture Kids*, ed. Jill Dyer and Roger Dyer (Kingswood, SA, Australia: MK Merimna, 1993).

<sup>261</sup> Nina Richter, *Third Culture Kids: Transkulturelle Kindheits- und Jugenderfahrungen* (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2011), 28.

Richter, third culture is transverse rather than monocultural, multicultural, or intercultural. Welsch suggests that not only third culture but all cultures are to varying extent transcultural. If so, a transcultural model of culture would serve to normalize the cultural heritage of TCKs and make TCKs the exemplification of current cultural beings rather than the exception. Transculturality also serves as a more adequate model for culture than an essentialized notion of culture.

Paul Hiebert defines culture as “the integrated system of learned patterns of behavior, ideas, and products characteristic of a society.”<sup>262</sup> Culture consists of general patterns of how people are expected to behave (norms), the deeper concepts that underlie these patterns (values), and distinct artefacts particular to that society that are produced. All components are linked together to form a relatively stable system of meaning understood by members of that culture. Culture is thus a socially constructed shared and learned system. The difficulty, however, in defining a particular culture lies in identifying the borders where a particular culture ends and another culture begins. Cultures, territories, peoples, and nation-states have often been conflated, giving rise to the misleading impression that cultures are independent islands that express an ‘essence’ of a place, people, or nation-state. This view is highly problematic especially in the age of globalization and would render third culture an anomaly at best and a ‘non-culture’ at worst effectively declaring TCKs to accidental freaks of recent history or simply meaningless ‘non-people.’

Welsch advocates an alternative model of culture and cultural identity based on transculturality.<sup>263</sup> He contrasts his model with the traditional model of culture put forth by Johann Gottfried Herder.<sup>264</sup> According to Welsch, Herder’s outdated concept of culture has three main elements: Social homogenization, ethnic consolidation, and intercultural delimitation.<sup>265</sup> First, the traditional model holds that every member of a culture is an unmistakable instance of this particular culture in all regards. Second, every culture is always a culture of a specific folk. Third, every culture is distinct and clearly separated from all other cultures. We can recognize

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<sup>262</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1983), 25.

<sup>263</sup> Wolfgang Welsch, "Transculturality - the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today," in *Spaces of Cultures : City-Nation-World*, ed. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999); "Rethinking Identity in the Age of Globalization - a Transcultural Perspective," *Aesthetics & Art Science* 1 (2002).

<sup>264</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784 - 1791).

<sup>265</sup> Welsch, "Transculturality - the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today," 194-95.

how the idea of third culture itself, with a first passport culture and a second host culture, arose within an understanding of culture similar to Herder's. Third culture arises because of clearly defined differences between cultures the TCK experiences. However, we have also noticed that third culture cannot make sense within Herder's model.

Welsch argues that this nationalistic concept of culture is not only untenable but also dangerous. First, cultures are not as uniform as imagined. Welsch argues that "modern societies are multicultural in themselves, encompassing a multitude of varying ways of life and lifestyles."<sup>266</sup> The inner complexity of modern cultures does not allow us to speak of '*the* German culture' or '*the* Japanese culture' as if the perfect form of what it means to be a member of a culture existed abstractly in pure form. Second, whereas Herder imagined cultures as closed spheres and autonomous islands each corresponding to a geographic area, Welsch argues that historical evidence shows that patterns of behaviour, ideas and products have crossed cultures from very early on. Therefore, cultures cannot be understood in isolation but only in relation to each other. Finally, Welsch argues that Herder's emphasis on the own and exclusion of the foreign is a form of "cultural racism."<sup>267</sup> What defines cultures today are not its clear cut borders but its various networks of relations to other ideas that are similar to varying degrees.

Welsch argues that a more accurate concept to grasp the nature of today's cultures is transculturality. Transculturality is a consequence of both the "inner differentiation and complexity of modern cultures"<sup>268</sup> and "cultures' external networking."<sup>269</sup> Cultures are internally diverse and externally interconnected and entangled with other cultures. Therefore, for every culture, other cultures have become inner components to varying degrees and, hence, there is nothing absolutely foreign to cultures any more. Instead of the own/foreign separation, the only classification that can be made is in metaphorically spatial terms of near/far. Instead of individual islands, culture should be understood as a spider web that is connected to all other spider webs with relative centres that can shift with every new connection established.

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

This has serious consequences for individual cultural identity. Welsch starts from the premise that modern individuals possess multiple attachments and identities that cut across cultures<sup>270</sup> and argues that transcultural identities cannot be equated with national or civic identities. Welsch writes that “the insinuation that someone who possesses an Indian or German passport must also culturally be an Indian or a German and that, if this isn't the case, he's some guy without a fatherland, or a traitor to his fatherland, is as foolish as it is dangerous.”<sup>271</sup> Detached from national circumscription and civic categorization, only cultures understood as transcultures can become genuine cultures and transcultural people can become genuinely cultural, freed from the constraint of the state.

Against the criticism that transculturality will inevitably lead to a uniform world-civilization, Welsch argues that transculturality is able to account for both globalizing as well as particularizing tendencies.<sup>272</sup> Instead of uniformization, the transcultural permeations create diversity of local cultures. Welsch explains that “transcultural webs are (...) woven with different threads, and in different manner”<sup>273</sup> and thus the more transculturally connected cultures become the more global the transculture will be in terms of its scope and connectedness and the more unique the transculture will be in terms of content. Welsch concludes that “[transculture] is able to cover both global and local, universalistic and particularistic aspects, and it does so quite naturally, from the logic of transcultural processes themselves.”<sup>274</sup> There is thus a distinction between the global dimension (connectedness, mode) and local dimension (diversity, content).

Richter argues that Welsch's model of transculture fits third culture but she still distinguishes between transcultures, such as third culture, and other cultures to which transculturality does not apply, effectively denying Welsch's claim that all cultures are transcultural.<sup>275</sup> According to Welsch's model, however, third culture should not be an exception to cultures but an example of transculturality, and the difference between e.g. German culture and third culture is not one of nature but one of degree. This would suggest that different third cultures should have formed increasingly

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>275</sup> Richter, *Third Culture Kids: Transkulturelle Kindheits- und Jugenderfahrungen*.

diversified transcultural subcultures that should have made any commonalities between TCKs from different host and home cultures virtually unrecognisable. This, however, is not the case since third culture is not a fusion of several cultures but rather a culture of mediation and TCKs have no problem recognizing each other, relating to each other, and identifying with each other. While particulars such as languages used or customs observed differ from TCK to TCK, these are not the most salient features of the TCK's self-understanding. The particulars might constitute the peripheral identity but not the core identity of TCKs.

The unifying element in third culture is thus not to be found in the local dimension but in the global dimension. What distinguishes third culture from other transcultures is that it establishes connections between transcultures of high degrees of disparateness and across wider cultural distances in a highly fragmented fashion. In the case of non-third culture transcultures, it is the diverse *content* emerging from the network that creates local distinctiveness and relatively distinguishes one transculture from another transculture. Although cultures in this sense only differ relatively and not absolutely, we can still easily distinguish between cultures, e. g. Japanese and German culture. In the case of third culture, it is the transcultural *mode* of connectedness and interaction between various networks of transcultures behind all transcultures that creates the recognizable commonness among all TCKs. Welsch is thus correct in insisting that all cultures are transcultures and Richter is right in arguing for a distinction between transcultural cultures, where *content* and *local dimension* take precedence, and the transcultural third culture, where *mode* and *global dimension* take precedence.

## **Conclusion**

Welsch's model of culture as transculture helps see third culture not as an anomaly but an extreme example of the widespread trend of transculturality. While originally first culture, second culture, and third culture relied on an outdated essentialized notion of culture, Welsch's model serves as a better explanation for culture in general and third culture in particular. Every relative culture finds itself negotiating and mediating between different cultural positions. TCKs and non-TCKs thus differ in degree. However, it is the extent of the degree that makes a difference in saliency. Whereas for first or second cultures, the transcultural content, which can but does not have to coincide with the majority of a nation-state, a geographical place, or an

ethnic group, takes on importance and attains high saliency, for the third culture the transcultural mode stands out as the most salient aspect of TCKs. Third culture and TCKs can thus only be understood in terms of their mediation and negotiation between relative cultural centres found in the global web of cultural interconnectedness.

Mediation thus stands out as a core value for TCKs. Strongly identifying with the transcultural mode of spanning different cultures, TCKs find themselves negotiating between differences finding themselves both being a part of the different relative centres of transcultures as well as apart from individual transcultures. The concept of being both 'neither/nor' and 'both/and' thus merits further analysis.

## Chapter 8

### Liminality and Third Culture Kids

#### Introduction

In order to further shed light on TCKs finding themselves both ‘neither/nor’ and ‘both/and’ in their transculturality this chapter now turns to the concept of ‘liminality’. Liminality, from the Latin word ‘*limen*’ meaning ‘threshold,’ ‘doorway,’ or ‘limit,’ describes the psychological, neurological, or metaphysical state of in-betweenness. Liminality serves two purposes in this discussion. First, it is useful in describing the transcultural position of TCKs, betwixt and between different cultural positions. Second, liminality also features in Christianity (e.g. Christ on the cross; the believer undergoing baptism) and therefore serves as a bridge to bring together our sociological discussion of TCKs and the later theological application. Liminality, adapted under the impact of our discussion of transculturality and the following key concepts of non-place, liquidity, and marginality, thus constitutes the underlying theme which runs through this work.

#### Liminality: Betwixt and Between

Barbara Schaetti and Sheila Ramsey suggest that the social-psychological concept of liminality lies at the very core of third culture and its members.<sup>276</sup> Liminality is a state of transition, betwixt and between what is left behind and what will come. Liminality describes a state of neither this nor that which escapes conventional categorization. For TCKs who experience repeated transition between places, liminality is an appropriate notion to apply.

Liminality as an anthropological concept was coined by Arnold Van Gennep (1873-1957) and further developed by Victor Turner (1920-1983). Van Gennep explored liminality through cultural or religious ‘rites of passage’.<sup>277</sup> Transitions in these rites follow three stages. First, there is the phase of *separation* where individuals detach themselves from a set of cultural conditions. The second phase is one of *marginality* or liminality marked by ambiguity. Here individuals pass through a realm that has few or none of the characteristics of the previous or next state.

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<sup>276</sup> Schaetti and Ramsey, "The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality."

<sup>277</sup> Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960).



Finally, the passage is completed by *aggregation* or reincorporation, where ambiguity is resolved and status is regained. Usually the transition is ritualistic and starts with a triggering event. Attaining adulthood constitutes a typical example of liminality in the context of rites of passage. An adolescent boy separates himself from his parents, effectively dying to his childhood. Next, he goes through a liminal state of neither boy nor man where he must prove that he is ready for adulthood. Finally, he is accepted back into the community as an adult male. Thus, liminality describes a state in between one's former identity and one's new identity.

Turner focused on the state of liminality.<sup>278</sup> He describes "liminal personae," people in the state of liminality, as follows:

The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ("Threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.<sup>279</sup>

Liminality escapes cultural categorization and the liminal person is in a state of limbo, neither governed by the norms and values of the previous cultural status nor of the anticipated cultural status. It is a state of neither/nor and is rich with ambiguity in terms of cultural identity.

Liminality, however, is not simply a matter of only neither/nor. Turner argues that when passing from one opposite position to the other extreme "the opposites, as it were, constitute one another and are mutually indispensable."<sup>280</sup> Liminality thus cannot exist in isolation from before and after and even though it eludes being entirely defined either by the preliminal or the postliminal. Turner writes that the liminal persons are symbolically "neither living nor dead from one aspect, and both living and dead from another."<sup>281</sup> He calls this "peculiar unity of the liminal."<sup>282</sup> During the transition the liminal person is suspended in the air by the gravitational pull of both stable states. Without keeping the before and after in tension, the liminal space would collapse and the liminal person would simply be alienated. Liminality is therefore a state of both 'neither/nor' and 'both/and.'

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<sup>278</sup> Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites De Passage*," in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967); "Liminality and Communitas," in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Antistructure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).

<sup>279</sup> "Liminality and Community," 147.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>281</sup> "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites De Passage*," 97.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

## Liminality and Identity

Nic Beech applies Turner's concept of liminality to identity construction and reconstruction during times of turbulent social transition.<sup>283</sup> When the sense of self is significantly disrupted a person experiences liminality and the reconstruction of identity. Beech summarizes Turner arguing that the 'liminar' (i.e. liminal person) or interstructural person has four main characteristics. First, the liminar is "socially if not physically invisible."<sup>284</sup> Turner writes that "most of us see only what we expect to see, and what we expect to see is what we are conditioned to see when we have learned the definitions and classifications of our culture."<sup>285</sup> Due to the ambiguity the liminar is outside of definition and thus not recognized as existing legitimately. Second, liminality is linked to death.<sup>286</sup> This symbolic death entails the destruction of self, where the liminar, stripped of preliminal attributes, is reduced to nothingness.<sup>287</sup> Beech comments that often the ritually dead are regarded as "unclean" and need to be separated from others so as not to "pollute" them.<sup>288</sup> The elusiveness of liminars is perceived as a threat to the stability of non-liminars. Third, during liminality, the liminar has no rights.<sup>289</sup> Deprived of status and possession, the liminar is at the mercy of the power brokers of the preliminal and post liminal cultural systems. Four, liminality is a stage of reflection where outside the box thinking is possible.<sup>290</sup> Upon critical reflection, the liminar forms a new identity with new influence and responsibilities. Through the disrupting experience of the triggering event, the liminar forms a new identity that is meaningful for the individual and community, ideally thereby resolving liminality.<sup>291</sup>

Far from merely being a state of deprivation, freedom and flexibility are also marks of liminality. For example, Turner writes that "liminality is the realm of primitive hypothesis, where there is a certain freedom to juggle with the factors of life (...) there is a promiscuous intermingling and juxtaposing of the categories of

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<sup>283</sup> Nic Beech, "Liminality and the Practices of Identity Reconstruction," *Human Relations* 64, no. 2 (2011).

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>285</sup> Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites De Passage*," 95.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-7.

<sup>287</sup> "Liminality and Community," 151.

<sup>288</sup> Beech, "Liminality and the Practices of Identity Reconstruction," 287.

<sup>289</sup> Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites De Passage*," 98-9.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>291</sup> Beech, "Liminality and the Practices of Identity Reconstruction," 287.

event, experience, and knowledge,”<sup>292</sup> implying that not being circumscribed by categories deprives the individual of power but also of limits. Turner calls this “sacred poverty.”<sup>293</sup>

In the sense of reconstructing one's identity through liminality, Beech envisions a temporary transition that results in aggregation and stable meaning. For example, a person who is made redundant at work (triggering event) goes through the experience of unemployment (liminality) and finally finds a new job (reintegration). However, Beech also leaves open the possibility of a “more longitudinal experience of ambiguity and in-between-ness within a changeful context”<sup>294</sup> such as that of a temp worker who is neither unemployed nor fully employed but cannot resolve this situation. From Beech's perspective, identity construction occurs in the interplay between people's self-identity (the person's self-concept) and their social-identity (the person in external discourse, institutions and cultures). Liminal identity work practices, such as experimenting with new versions of oneself, recognizing one has become a different person, or reflecting through self-questioning, occur at the intersection of the person's agency and the surrounding institutional or cultural structure.<sup>295</sup> People are in between or in the liminal when, during their transition from one constructed identity to the next reconstructed identity, partial and incomplete identity changes occur due to instabilities in the social context, ongoing ambiguity and multiplicity of meanings, and the lack of resolution. For example, workers who change their career, go through a transitional time where their status is in limbo until they are fully reintegrated and have established their role and place in the new context. Through the instability and flexibility of the liminal state, workers are able to (re)construct their identity and adapt to new responsibilities and challenges.

Beech shows how liminality, a concept originally from anthropology, can be used to understand people's ambiguous identities after a triggering event. A disruption in a person's environment calls that person's identity into question causing the person to enter a state of liminality. This state of self-questioning and self-reflection can be temporary or more or less permanent.

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<sup>292</sup> Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites De Passage*," 106.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>294</sup> Beech, "Liminality and the Practices of Identity Reconstruction," 288.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 289-90.

### **Liminality and Third Culture Kids**

Schaetti and Ramsey apply liminality to the experience of TCKs.<sup>296</sup> TCKs typically go through transition cycles resembling Van Gennep's rites of passage. For example, missionary kids accompanying their parents are typically on a 5-year transition cycle. The family moves to their assigned mission field, spends 4 years there, and returns for a one-year furlough to their passport country before starting the same cycle again. Similarly, military dependants, diplomat kids, or business kids go through regular transition cycles often during the entire time of their developmental years. Furthermore, TCKs in boarding schools go through seasonal transition cycles moving back and forth between the school and the parents' home during extended vacations. Each move can be seen as a triggering event followed by a liminal phase.

According to Pollock and Van Reken, these transitions follow five stages: 1. Involvement; 2. Leaving; 3. Transition; 4. Entering; 5. Re-Engagement.<sup>297</sup> The first two stages correspond to Van Gennep's phase of separation. The TCK says goodbye to family, friends, places, and most importantly to the cultural environment that had been supporting the TCK's status and identity. The transition stage corresponds to the liminal phase. This can range from a 24-hour airplane ride to a week-long family vacation as often times families take the opportunity to travel after completing their previous responsibilities and before being assigned new responsibilities. Stages four and five correspond to van Gennep's reintegration phase. Families settle down in the new place and (re)create their lives in light of the new environment.

In terms of identities, TCKs are often forced to reinvent themselves with every transition that they go through. New friends have to be made, new languages learned, new responsibilities mastered, new norms and values adopted, new statuses acquired, and ultimately new identities formed. Only taking geographical relocation into account, TCKs repeatedly and regularly go through temporary liminal states that are ideally resolved once the family settles down or repatriates.

In a different sense, however, the whole third culture community can be said to exist in a liminal state suspended between first and second (or more) cultures. In this sense TCKs spend a significant part of their developmental years in a "perpetual

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<sup>296</sup> Schaetti and Ramsey, "The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality."

<sup>297</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 66-73.

liminal state”<sup>298</sup> on the threshold of their parent’s culture and their host culture(s), always mediating between several cultures and navigating the ambiguity produced by conflicting cultural systems. Reintegration and identity resolution are perpetually deferred and are actually impossible. Here, liminality in TCKs differs slightly from Beech's liminality which is a process of reconstructing one's identity that will end in a resolution. In addition, the liminality of TCKs consists of the ambiguity between multiple internalized cultural systems, whereas the liminality of Beech comes from the discrepancy between the self and the surrounding structure. For TCKs, the preliminal and postliminal states are imagined cultural selves or internalized cultural roles that the TCK performs. The cultural contradiction runs through the TCK's inner self. According to Schaetti and Ramsey “the experience of liminality becomes the most constant, lived experience”<sup>299</sup> and is therefore not the process by which TCKs construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct their cultural identities, but *is* the very place betwixt and between multiple conflicting cultures TCKs find themselves at home.

Liminality is closely intertwined with the common themes of change, relationships, worldview, and cultural orientation: Change is the ongoing triggering event that brings about the TCK’s liminality; relationships occur within the liminal phase of always simultaneously meeting, relating, and parting with people across race, ethnicity, and language; the TCK's transcultural worldview of conflicting cultural norms and values is kept in balance by liminality, the simultaneous neither/nor and both/and; and, finally, TCKs’ cultural identity finds itself at home in liminality. In liminality TCKs are “exposed to multiple cultural traditions during their developmental years (...) [and] have the opportunity to achieve identities informed by all, constricted by none, balanced on the threshold of each.”<sup>300</sup> The ‘neither/nor’ and ‘both/and’ are balanced in liminality. Third culture is thus suspended in between two or more cultures, refusing to be incorporated and categorized by any one culture, separated as foreign by each culture, socially invisible due to its ambiguity, marginalized to some extent due to the status as ‘other’, yet free and flexible due to its transcendence of categories and borders. To use Turner's comparison of liminality to death, TCKs ‘die’ to their surrounding

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<sup>298</sup> Kathleen R. Gilbert, "Loss and Grief between and among Cultures: The Experience of Third Culture Kids," *Illness, Crisis & Loss* 16, no. 2 (2008): 94.

<sup>299</sup> Schaetti and Ramsey, "The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality," par. 17.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

cultures and whatever ethnocentric identity that might be constructed is destroyed. TCKs are liberated from form and borders to embrace a transcultural, ethnorelative third culture identity.

TCKs can take ownership of their liminality and stop viewing it as a mere deficiency imposed upon them by fate. Schaetti and Ramsey suggest that instead of a world of 'either/or,' liminality makes possible to find a sense of home in the complex world of 'both/and.'<sup>301</sup> While actively participating in each cultural context TCKs share in, TCKs can nevertheless transcend them by also remaining neither this nor that, choosing to identify with TCKs instead. TCKs thus find themselves not only mediating between several cultures but also constantly negotiating within themselves in between 'both/and' and 'neither/nor.' By finding themselves at home in liminality, TCKs are at home everywhere and nowhere and are a part of their surrounding cultures as well as apart from them. Liminality thus serves as a useful concept to grasp the complexities of the experience of TCKs.

### **Liminality and Christianity**

Liminality in rites of passage often has religious significance. It is thus an appropriate lens through which to look at both TCKs as well as a TCK theology. One illustration of liminality in a rite of passage is the sacrament of baptism where the neophyte passes through a symbolic death to re-emerge with a new identity. However, Turner goes further to suggest that liminality can become an institutionalized state, making transitions a permanent condition akin to the state of TCKs in relation to culture.<sup>302</sup> Turner writes that "the Christian is a stranger to the world, a pilgrim, a traveller, with no place to rest his head"<sup>303</sup> indicating that the whole life of a Christian believer is marked by liminality. Liminal beings such as the Good Samaritan are seen as redemptive figures who can restore equilibrium and eliminate injustice because of their in-between status that permeates dividing categories and is free from arbitrary definitions.

The striking similarity between TCKs and Christians in terms of liminality is well illustrated in this section from the Epistle to Diognetus:

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Turner, "Liminality and Community," 152.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a particular form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. (...) But inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of the ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. (...) They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven.<sup>304</sup>

Similar to TCKs, Christians are simultaneously participants and strangers in their own culture due to their liminal status. Furthermore, as a citizen of the kingdom of God which has simultaneously already arrived and is still yet to come, Christians are liminal beings suspended between Christ's first and second coming. Central to both the question of TCK identity and Christian identity, liminality thus serves as an adequate point of contact between TCKs and a theology and acts as a key theme in the applied TCK theology.

## **Conclusion**

Third culture is a mediating culture located on the threshold of several cultures. Third culture belongs to both home and host cultures in one sense, yet are neither home nor host cultures in another sense. Similarly, TCKs feel at home everywhere and nowhere exhibiting a two dimensional identity that has a local (a part of) as well as a global (apart from) dimension. Liminality is useful in conceptualizing this in-between world of both 'neither/nor' and 'both/and' of TCKs describing both the deprivation of status and rights (symbolic death) as well as the freedom to transcend conventional categories (sacred poverty). Liminality also provides the crucial point of contact with theology. Using liminality as a key concept, subsequent chapters will further inform and shape this concept to be finally applied as the cornerstone to an applied TCK theology.

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<sup>304</sup> Unknown, *The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus*, 5:1-9.

## Chapter 9

### Non-Place and Third Culture Kids

#### Introduction

In order to further explore the theme of liminality, we will examine TCKs in their relation to place and cultural identity. Whereas liminality often refers to a time in between before and after, using the categories of 'place' and 'non-place' by Marc Augé will serve to imagine liminal in spatial terms. This helps to imagine the 'in-between' as a place to belong to. Furthermore, the discussion of 'non-place' in conjunction with TCKs' experience of loss draws attention to the nature of TCK's cultural identity as a 'non-identity'.

#### Marc Augé's 'Non-Places'

With every transition TCKs find themselves boarding another plane, roaming through another transit lounge to the extent that these transient places through which information, people, commodities rush through become strangely familiar and even relieving. As one person in the short documentary *Les Passagers: A TCK Story* puts it: "Before I learned how to walk, I already knew how to fly."<sup>305</sup> Closely related to the liminal transcultural identity of TCKs are these liminal spaces, such as airports, stations, or highways. These spaces, though they are solely designed to be passed through as quickly and efficiently as possible, become places of significance for TCKs. Each third culture community away from the first culture is itself a temporary space that sees people, information, and commodities pass through. The constant frequenting of places brings to the forefront the question of the place TCKs belong to, the question of home. Marc Augé names these transient places 'non-places', whose emergence is a consequence of 'supermodernity' (his word for postmodernity) and contrasts these spaces with the conventional 'anthropological place'.<sup>306</sup> A discussion of Augé's non-places sheds further light on the TCK's relation to places as well as point out the challenges of seeking an identity in liminal space.

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<sup>305</sup> Aga Alegria, "Les Passagers : A TCK Story," (2010). Link to short film: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FouOIB\\_AAfww](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FouOIB_AAfww) (Accessed 2015.09.23).

<sup>306</sup> Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, 29.



This chapter will first analyse Augé's concept of non-place and, second, discuss its relevance to TCKs.

### **Anthropological Place**

Augé defines the place where a culture is located and cultivated 'anthropological place'. This geographical area is "occupied by the indigenous inhabitants who live in it, cultivate it, defend it, mark its strong points and keep its frontiers under surveillance."<sup>307</sup> It is as much real, since it exists in time and space, as it is an invention since it is a "symbolic construction of space"<sup>308</sup> invested with meaning for the people who live in it. It is the place of culture and nation states.

Anthropological places have three important characteristics: identity, relations, and history.<sup>309</sup> First, anthropological places are places of identity. Simply put, to be born in a place is to belong to the place and identify with the meaning assigned to the place. Second, to inhabit this place means to occupy a position relative to other inhabitants. Anthropological places are thus defined by relations. Third, these places are necessarily historical places as history provides stability to identity and relations. The organization of space and the setting in time is thus how identities and relations are maintained and protected. Anthropological places are historical places that employ monuments which transcend temporal contingencies and in which inhabitants can recognize themselves.

Augé argues that conventionally places are the locus of culture. A person's motherland or home town thus has a particular significance to the acculturated person. The question 'Who are you?' is inevitably linked to the question 'Where are you from?' Augé also reminds the reader that these anthropological places are, in a sense, illusions as they are imagined places. This is not to say that these illusions have powerful real-world consequences for people.

### **Supermodernity**

What has made our contemporary world and the cultural places it consists of much more complicated is the new situation Augé calls 'supermodernity'. Supermodernity is characterized by its essential quality of excess that relativizes anthropological

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 51-56.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

place and overwhelms it.<sup>310</sup> Augé names three figures of excess: Overabundance of events; spatial overabundance; and individualization of reference (overabundance of egos).

First, the overabundance of information and increasing interdependence of the world make it difficult to make sense of the whole of the present and to ascribe meaning to the recent past. Augé writes that this overabundance of events threatens to rob our experiences of meaning. Second, progressing globalization causes the shrinking of the planet and leaves a sense of spatial overabundance. Every place on earth feels within reach. Augé names three factors behind the excess of places: first, the sense of the vastness of the universe reduced our earth to an infinitesimal point; second, rapid means of transportation are giving us access to places all over the world; third, the media's 24-hour news cycle presents us with simultaneous vision of events taking place on the other side of the globe.

These two figures of excess relativize the way we view ourselves in our time and place and give rise to the third figure of excess, namely that of the individual. Augé observes that “the individual wants to be a world in himself; he intends to interpret the information delivered to him by himself and for himself.”<sup>311</sup> The individual, divorced from collective identification, from history, from grand narratives, must create meaning for him or herself. Thus a multitude of frames of references are created as each person judges the world from his or her point of view.

Supermodernity is a new situation with new kinds of human beings making different use of space. TCKs are one kind of these new human beings who are dislocated from anthropological place which used to be the basis for stable and solid identities, relationships, and historical roots. Enabled by the shrinking of the planet and free from history and stable identities by the overabundance of events, globally mobile TCKs find themselves restless and rootless. It is not a coincidence that the TCK documentary *Les Passagers* shows clips of trains, air planes, ships, and people rushing through urban centres with a clock ticking in the background symbolizing an overabundance of events and places and a sense of urgency and immediacy. TCKs are a product of Augé's supermodernity at the heart of which lies ‘non-place’.

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<sup>310</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 37.

## From Place to Non-Place

In the context of this new situation, Augé claims that “if a place can be defined as relational, historical, and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place.”<sup>312</sup>

Supermodernity produces these non-places. Augé elaborates on this non-place:

A world where people are born in the clinic and die in hospital, where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions (hotel chains and squads, holiday clubs and refugee camps, shantytowns threatened with demolition or doomed to festering longevity); where a dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces is developing; where the habitué of supermarkets, slot machines and credit cards communicate wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce; a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral (...).<sup>313</sup>

These non-places are marked by movement and change. Augé almost sounds as if he laments the decline of anthropological places and presents non-place as a lonely, cold, void place where transactions are wordless and automated and history is reduced to road signs and travel guides. Non-places are airplanes, highways, super-malls, and bullet trains as well as the facilities related to these such as hotels, lobbies, stations, airports, and parking lots. Often entire urban centres are non-places. Non-places are designed to be passed through and also to bypass anthropological places. This leads to a feeling of disorientation and discontinuity in the passer-by.

The typical person who frequents these non-places is the supermodern solitary traveller which Augé contrasts with the pilgrim of past times.<sup>314</sup> The discontinuity and disorientation of the solitary traveller prevents him or her from being fully present in anthropological places. For travellers neither identity, nor relations, nor history really make any sense. The travelling self becomes his or her own spectacle moving through spaces in which “solitude is experienced as an overburdening or emptying of individuality.”<sup>315</sup> Unlike a pilgrimage whose destination is overloaded with meaning, for the traveller, the space of non-place “creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similtude.”<sup>316</sup> The numerous travellers thus find themselves alone together in the anonymity of non-places. Furthermore, Augé writes that “there is no room for history unless it has been transformed into an

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 77-78.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 86-91.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 103.

element of spectacle, usually in allusive text. What reigns there is actuality, the urgency of the present moment.”<sup>317</sup> Simply put, non-places do not give identities, do not establish relations, and do not have a history. The impression that Augé leaves of non-places is one of aloofness, artificial humanity, and sterilized loneliness but strangely with a hint of freedom from the ethnocentrism of anthropological place which lets each person be themselves.

Augé finally asks the unavoidable question: Where are these individuals who perpetually pass through non-places at home? He concludes that in the world of supermodernity people are always and never at home.<sup>318</sup> This echoes the mantra that TCKs are home everywhere and nowhere.

### **Criticism of Marc Augé**

The question that emerges is whether non-places or liminal spaces really cannot provide identities and whether people at home in liminal space cannot have a sense of belonging together. For Augé, non-places are by definition not a source of identity and people frequenting non-places are necessarily condemned to solitude. However, the nihilistic depiction of non-place is oversimplified and biased.

Emer O’Beirne argues that the context in which Augé writes about non-places is that of a “contemporary existential crisis, a crisis of relations to the other, and by extension a crisis of individual identity constituted through such relations.”<sup>319</sup> Augé sees a threat in non-places to identities and communities. This highlights the position from which Augé writes, namely nostalgia. O’Beirne comments that Augé writes from a perspective of “one on the wrong side of middle age, for whom the world is changing too fast, who is nostalgic for the world of his childhood, and who, while not yet out of touch with current fashion, feels more allegiance to customs and values that have disappeared or are disappearing.”<sup>320</sup> In other words, when Augé writes that non-places lack identity, relations and history what he means is that a place that lacks identity, relations, and history *for him* must be a non-place.

The distinction between anthropological place and non-place is not as objective as Augé would like the reader to believe but is rather a matter of

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 103-04.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>319</sup> Emer O’Beirne, "Mapping the Non-Lieu in Marc Augé's Writings," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 42, no. 1 (2006): 38.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 39.

perception. What is an anthropological place for Augé, might actually be a non-place for others.<sup>321</sup> For example, Augé is inconsistent when it comes to the Paris Metro, which should be a typical non-place but for Augé is a place intimately intertwined with his own personal history as a Parisian and thus clearly an anthropological place he identifies with. Rather than being void of meaning, the metro is full of meaning for Augé, who knows the station names and the history behind the places that the trains stop at.<sup>322</sup> One person's anthropological place might be another person's non-place.

Similarly, what might be a non-place for Augé can actually be the workplace and home for others. Sarah Sharma writes that "[i]n fact it is not the non-place that displaces the local or creates asocial facelessness inasmuch as the theorist of non-places erases the local in these accounts of non-place"<sup>323</sup> suggesting that it is Augé himself who refuses to view certain places as anthropological and thereby does not allow identity and community to emerge. The answer to whether a place is a non-place or not depends on who has the power to define that place. Sharma especially emphasizes the labour performed at non-places that results in an emergence of locality, in other words: identity and community. She writes "[i]f labor was taken into consideration then no claim to local bypass or extraterritoriality of its contents can justly be made."<sup>324</sup> For the people who work at e.g. hotels and airports, these spaces effectively cease to be non-places and become an anthropological place. One person's non-place might be another person's anthropological place.

This does not, however, answer the question whether people who still perceive non-places as temporary and liminal spaces rather than permanent places to work and live at can claim such places to be anthropological places. Airports are two different places for the passenger and the airline employee. If the standard by which identity, community, and history as recognized in anthropological place is applied to non-places as *non-places* then people such as TCKs, who do not claim to primarily belong to any anthropological place but rather belong to liminal space as *non-places*, are effectively 'non-people' as those who categorize such places see them as invalid places to belong to. It is from within anthropological place that non-identities, non-

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 45-46.

<sup>322</sup> Marc Augé, *In the Metro*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

<sup>323</sup> Sarah Sharma, "Baring Life and Lifestyle in the Non-Place," *Cultural Studies* 23, no. 1 (2009): 134.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 145.

histories, and non-relations are imposed on internationally highly mobile people in non-places.

Similarly to the culturally liminal person who is invisible, uncategorizable, powerless, or simply 'dead' by the standards of stable cultural states, liminal spaces are invisible, uncategorizable, 'anti-places' (and therefore rightfully called 'non-places'), when evaluated from anthropological places. Just as cultural liminality is a state of suspension betwixt and between multiple conflicting cultures, non-place is liminal space suspended in the nowhere, betwixt and between anthropological places. Augé thus is correct in suggesting that judging from within anthropological place, people who do not belong to any particular anthropological place and find themselves within non-place lack the identity and community of anthropological place. Anthropological place plays part in the destruction of the anthropologically placed person in non-place and the creation of the liminal 'non-person' who claims non-place as their own non-territory.

### **Non-Place and Third Culture Kids**

Augé's distinction between anthropological place and non-place corresponds to the contrast between first/second culture and third culture. Both first and second cultures are firmly grounded in anthropological place that provides its inhabitants with a stable and continuous identity and community. Conventionally, people are born in one place, identify with that place, and build their lives in the context of that place. Third culture, on the other hand, transforms its location into a non-place. Both non-place and third culture are characterized by transience as both are marked by the movement of people, commodities and information. Unlike immigrants, third culture families are dispatched to third cultures expected to return to the parent's anthropological place. Even while residing in the host nationals' anthropological place, the TCK's situation is always a temporary, non-anthropological arrangement. We see here the collapsing of the 'temporally between' and the 'spatially between' into one continuum governed by liminality. Thus, not only do TCKs spend a significant amount of their lives in non-places such as hotels or airports living out of their suitcases, more significantly, third culture itself is firmly placed in non-place (neither here nor there but everywhere and nowhere) and timed in non-time (neither then, nor next but always and never).

From the point of view of anthropological place, the liminal space of third culture is not a legitimate place with a permanent and stable identity and community. Just as liminal people are segregated and feared, so non-place is perceived as threatening and is resisted. Thus TCKs are illegitimate ‘non-persons’ with an identity, a history, and relations not recognized by the standards of anthropological place. This experience surfaces as a sensation of loss, often hidden, and disenfranchised grief.<sup>325</sup> Pollock and Van Reken identify four key areas in which the TCK experiences losses due to their upbringing in non-place: people, places, pets, and possessions.<sup>326</sup> In addition to these four concrete areas of losses, Kathleen Gilbert also identified existential losses on a deeper level, especially loss of personal identity and loss of home.<sup>327</sup> These losses correspond to the lack of identity and community that Augé imposes on non-place.

It is the nature of these losses that deserves particular attention. Gilbert observes that at the root of the problem of loss lies mobility, the key characteristic of non-place. She writes that “this mobility leads to almost perpetual state of psychological transition”<sup>328</sup> indicating that any place TCKs find themselves in are typically experienced as non-places. When moving from one place to another certain things have to be given up or cannot even be claimed to be possessed in the first place. According to Gilbert, “many of the losses experienced by TCKs, particularly those that are hidden, are ambiguous. Ambiguous losses are those that lack clarity and can lead to sharply different assessments of exactly who or what has been lost.”<sup>329</sup> This makes sense if third culture is seen as taking place in a non-place occupied by liminal non-people who by definition cannot possess or establish relations, as permanent possession of things and permanent relations properly belong to anthropological place and the pre- or postliminal person. Thus “losses often are hidden, and being hidden, are not acknowledged”<sup>330</sup> and the grief of losing a piece of themselves is disenfranchised. In terms of liminality, as liminal persons TCKs are powerless and deprived of the right to belong, including the right to possess. Since

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<sup>325</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*. Chapter 12, 14.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 183-84.

<sup>327</sup> Gilbert, "Loss and Grief between and among Cultures: The Experience of Third Culture Kids."

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*

this loss is not recognized, TCKs are also deprived of the right to grieve what has been lost.

A poem titled “Mock Funeral” by TCK Alex Graham James illustrates this well:

There was no funeral.  
No flowers.  
No ceremony.  
No one had died.  
No weeping or wailing.  
Just in my heart.  
*I can't...*  
But I did anyway,  
and nobody knew I couldn't.  
*I don't want to...*  
But nobody else said they didn't.  
So I put down my panic  
and picked up my luggage  
and got on the plane.  
There was no funeral.<sup>331</sup>

This poem expresses the inseparableness of the deprivation of rights and disenfranchised grief of the TCK as non-person and the mobility of non-place. It also reflects how a transition such as a plane ride can be experienced as the death of the person, echoing the metaphor of death used in connection to the liminal phase. One participant in Gilbert's study put it as follows: “everyone acted like it was such a good thing that my friends are leaving, or that we were leaving, to go 'home.' I don't think they saw how hard it was for kids.”<sup>332</sup> The losses experienced within non-place are not recognized and instead the return ‘home,’ i.e. the return to the supposedly only legitimate anthropological place where rights and power are restored, is hailed as a victorious escape from non-place and a glorious restoration from liminal non-person to a ‘real person’. For parents, repatriation means the return to what is familiar and stable (anthropological place) and concludes the liminal phase of being on the move with a satisfying resolution and reintegration. When these expectations are projected on TCKs, however, what TCKs had come to expect as normative (non-place, liminality) is denied as having any validity. Losses take place within the context of disenfranchisement and what, from the point of view of TCKs, is possessed (including existential aspects such as home or identity) is denied from the point of view of anthropological place.

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<sup>331</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 159.

<sup>332</sup> Gilbert, "Loss and Grief between and among Cultures: The Experience of Third Culture Kids," 98.



Worth taking a closer look are the loss of persons, loss of place, loss of identity, and loss of home. The loss of persons due to mobility within non-place consists of a peer network that is “a constant state of flux.”<sup>333</sup> Gilbert observes that commonly TCKs learn to accept the loss of friends as inevitable, and one participant in the study even noting that “one grows comfortable with the notion that friendships last as long as a posting does.”<sup>334</sup> Thus, non-place are places that lack relations by the standards of anthropological place because they are not seen as lasting.

In terms of loss of place, Gilbert observes that each move to a new place dislocates some TCKs into a void where not only relationships are lost, but for some the very sense of place is lost. Gilbert writes “a significant minority of participants indicated they 'have no definite sense of place. There is no place for me that is more important than another,' and 'I've never felt tied to anyplace’”<sup>335</sup> and continues to observe that “unlikely as it seems, they truly did not feel a sense of loss of place with their moves.”<sup>336</sup> The ‘loss of non-place’ due to moving from one third culture space to another for these TCKs is an ambiguous loss or rather a ‘non-loss of place’. Whether a place could have been claimed as their own in the first place is doubted by TCKs themselves.

Beyond practical losses such as persons or place, TCKs frequently spoke in terms of symbolic loss, e.g. of identity. Gilbert comments that “for TCKs, questions of who they are, what they are, where they are from, what and who they can trust are examples of existential losses with which they must cope.”<sup>337</sup> Augé thus accurately predicts the existential loss TCKs experienced in non-places in terms of identity (who they are), history (where they are from), relations (loss of a sense of belonging). Interestingly, Gilbert concludes that “it was only when [TCKs] leave a world where the only constant is change (...), where others entered and exited one's life, and where it is normal for people to move from setting to setting and from country to country, that TCKs learned they were different,”<sup>338</sup> thus confirming that the lack of identity, history, and relations when confronted with the return to anthropological place is something imposed upon the TCK from outside the non-

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<sup>333</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., 104.

place. Who within the highly mobile non-place appeared as a normal and fully acceptable 'person', is judged as a 'non-person' by non-TCKs within monocultural anthropological place. Non-persons might be singled out as "circus freaks" or pushed to the margins as "terminally unique" resulting in "profound loneliness – an inability to ever completely mesh with a given culture."<sup>339</sup> As a consequence of TCKs' liminality and upbringing in non-place, TCKs are "between identities" feeling "[the]y had nowhere where [they] could be who [they] thought [they were]."<sup>340</sup> Again, the sensation of a loss of identity occurs when, from a point of view of anthropological place, the right to identity within non-place is rejected as invalid.

Finally, Gilbert mentions loss of a place TCKs can call 'home'. Instead of a straightforward loss, however, Gilbert comments that an absence of home is more accurate. She writes "the absence of a home in their [TCKs] life became most apparent when participants left the TCK lifestyle and moved to their passport country (...) for many, the place that was assumed to be their home was, in fact, strange to them."<sup>341</sup> Again, confronted with anthropological place and its standards of what home ought to be, the TCK realizes the lack of home. The question of where one is from cannot produce the desired answer for the anthropologically located person resulting in the sometimes painful realisation by TCKs that they have no place to belong to and are in fact 'nowhere.' Participants in Gilbert's study expressed "homesickness for a home that either does not exist or is a place to which they can no longer return."<sup>342</sup> Unable to accurately place the TCK on a map, the liminal TCK become invisible to the anthropologically placed person.

Rendered invisible, TCKs are stripped of their right to participate in any discourse rooted in anthropological place. Most importantly for us, any theology that is rooted in anthropological place is thus off limits to the TCK and any attempt to participate is seen as a dangerous, uninvited intrusion by an outsider. As long as theology is understood to be a discourse within anthropological place, TCKs as TCKs are unacceptable. Theology remains alien to the TCK and TCKs remain alien to the theology of anthropological place.

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<sup>339</sup> Ibid., 105. See also: Cottrell, "ATCKs Have Problems Relating to Own Ethnic Groups."

<sup>340</sup> Gilbert, "Loss and Grief between and among Cultures: The Experience of Third Culture Kids," 105.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 106.

The standards of anthropological place by which TCKs are required to produce identity, history, and relations in order to be legitimately recognized as persons, are actually the driving force behind liminality. Augé's refusal to judge non-places by any other standard than by anthropological place sustains non-places and are part of the very dynamic of liminality. As Turner described it, the liminal state is akin to death.

### **The Potential of Non-Place**

Liminality and non-place require thinking outside the box of anthropological place. Just as liminality has its own dynamic when it comes to identity, so non-place has its own dynamic of identity that is different from that of anthropological place. O'Beirne writes that rather than "simply presenting such spaces as repositories of alienation and loneliness [we should] explore their potential to produce contemporary forms of relation, and therefore identity and meaning."<sup>343</sup> Potential for resurrecting and reconstructing identity from the death of liminality can be found within the freedom found in non-place. O'Beirne even suggests that "the *non-lieu*, precisely because of its apparently blank quality, can be a salvation for the individual"<sup>344</sup> from the constraints of anthropological place. New identities can be forged within the relative freedom of non-place.

TCKs can construct an alternative identity and community within the context of their liminality which will fundamentally differ from how identity and community are constructed in anthropological place. In terms of home, Gilbert observes that some TCKs "settled on defining home as within themselves, wherever they were, where their family was, within their faith community, or see themselves as global citizen."<sup>345</sup> Alternative notions of 'home' thus emerge from the vacuum left in non-place. TCKs are given more freedom in defining themselves than anthropologically located people. Geographical notions of home are replaced with psychological, universal, social, spiritual, or global notions of home that provide the TCK with an alternative identity, history, relations and ultimately meaning. Importantly, as Gilbert points out faith communities can play a crucial role in the construction of liminal

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<sup>343</sup> O'Beirne, "Mapping the Non-Lieu in Marc Augé's Writings," 49.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>345</sup> Gilbert, "Loss and Grief between and among Cultures: The Experience of Third Culture Kids," 106.

identities. 'Home' from the perspective of non-place can thus also be theological. The question thus is what kind of identities can be constructed within liminal non-place.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on the question of where to belong. Since belonging to a place (anthropological place) holds such influence over who people are, TCKs naturally have a complicated relation to place. Growing up mobile within non-place, TCKs are judged to be invalid 'non-persons', relations to their peers that do not last and lack significance, and their personal history is hacked into disconnected pieces. These losses are often unacknowledged. Augé's non-place sheds light on how TCKs experience their liminality and his critical view towards non-place highlights the challenges that TCKs face in making liminality / non-place their legitimate place to belong to. The only redemption seems to be the salvific potential non-place has in that it can open ways for alternative ways of belonging, such as theological belonging.

## Chapter 10

### Liquid Modernity and Third Culture Kids

#### Introduction

Along with non-place, liquidity is another concept to further deepen our understanding to liminality. Liquidity, contrasted with solidity, as a metaphor for dynamic in-between identities serves to additionally highlight aspects of TCKs. This chapter will introduce Zygmunt Bauman's concept of liquid identities and also point out the pitfalls of identifying with liminality, namely the danger of becoming a passive bystander who cannot commit.

#### Zygmunt Bauman: Liquid Modernity and Identity

Zygmunt Bauman<sup>346</sup> views the modern world through the metaphor of liquid. Unlike Marc Augé<sup>347</sup>, who saw himself as standing within 'solid' anthropological place, Bauman's background itself is part of 'liquid modernity' where structures such as nation states are not as rigidly defined, and he is therefore less critical of it. Bauman is much more forthcoming than Augé in granting a way of life to highly mobile people. There are significant overlaps between his own life, his use of liquid as the metaphor to describe our times, and the situation that TCKs find themselves in. Bauman himself moved countries frequently, eventually settling in the UK as a Polish Jew in exile. Martin Jay remarks that Bauman's nomadic background is what "enabled him to be so sensitive to the changes in modern life"<sup>348</sup> arguing that Bauman lived the very liquid modernity that he was writing about. Bauman confirms this, writing:

[O]nce I had been set in motion, pulled out from wherever could pass for my 'natural habitat', there was no place where I could be seen as fitting in, as they say, one hundred per cent. In each and every place I was – sometimes slightly, at some other times blatantly – 'out of place'.<sup>349</sup>

Expelled from his anthropological place, Bauman confesses to finding himself more

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<sup>346</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000).

<sup>347</sup> Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*.

<sup>348</sup> Martin Jay, "Liquidity Crisis: Zygmunt Bauman and the Incredible Lightness of Modernity," *Theory, Culture & Society* 27, no. 6 (2010): 101.

<sup>349</sup> Zygmunt Bauman and Benedetto Vecchi, *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 12.

or less in non-place. This in turn raises complex questions of identity, questions that Bauman shares “practically with all men and women of the ‘liquid modern’ era.”<sup>350</sup> Bauman’s liquid modernity presents an insider perspective concerning the question of identity in liminality and non-place.

### **Liquid Modernity**

Augé states that non-places are the measure of our time. Similarly, Bauman uses liquid as the leading metaphor to describe the present state of modernity. The concept behind both of these is mobility. What liminality describes in terms of time and non-place in terms of place, Bauman describes in terms of shape. Bauman writes “fluids do not keep to any shape for long and are constantly ready (and prone) to change it; and so for them it is the flow of time that counts, more than the space they happen to occupy: that space, after all, they fill but ‘for a moment.’”<sup>351</sup> Instead of being rooted in a solid anthropological place and having a fixed shape or identity, Bauman argues that people flow through space and take on temporary identities.

Bauman argues that ‘melting the solids’ has always been a theme in modernity, but distinguishes between two phases: Solid modernity and liquid modernity. In early modernity, social structures were melted in order to emancipate them from pre-modern beliefs and loyalties. However, “one of the most powerful motives behind the urge to melt them was the wish to discover or invent solids of – for a change – *lasting solidity*, a solidity which one could trust and rely upon and which would make the world predictable and therefore manageable.”<sup>352</sup> The improved rigidity of social structures and categories were to ensure the freedom of the rational modern person. Bauman argues that “configurations, constellations, patterns of dependency and interaction are all thrown into the melting pot, to be subsequently recast and refashioned. (...) No mould was broken without being replaced with another.”<sup>353</sup> People thus had stable points of orientation, by which they could securely find their place in society and “the task confronting free individuals was to use their new freedom to find the appropriate niche and settle there through conformity: by faithfully following the rules and mode or conduct identified as right and proper for

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<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

<sup>351</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 2.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 6 - 7.

the location.”<sup>354</sup> Although people found new freedom to move and change, eventually, the goal was to settle in a solid place with a solid identity. In other words, the liminal person eventually reintegrated into society; the traveller passing through non-place eventually arrived at their destination, an anthropological place.

Bauman contrasts this solid modernity with liquid modernity, where melting has acquired a different meaning. What is now being melted are the bonds between individuals and human collectivities. Patterns and configurations that had been melted and recast before are no longer given. Bauman writes:

[W]e are presently moving from the era of pre-allocated ‘reference-groups’ into the epoch of ‘universal comparison’, in which the destination of individual self-constructing labours is endemically and incurably underdetermined, is not given in advance, and tends to undergo numerous and profound changes before such labours reach their only genuine end: that is, the end of the individual’s life.<sup>355</sup>

Individuals are constantly on the move going through change after change because structures such as peer groups have melted. Evolving as a person has become unpredictable but necessary. Liquidity means being alive and death is the ultimate solid state.

Augé’s anthropological place is part of the solid modernity, where ‘place’ is valued over ‘time’, rootedness over mobility. Modernity gave rise to the means to move more freely but in solid modernity people still settled in the next place. The melting of the solids and re-casting into new and improved solids thus corresponds to movement from one anthropological place to another anthropological place. Mobility only made sense in terms of destinations. These modern movements we know from waves of immigration. Non-places, on the other hand, are melted anthropological places that remain fluid. Instead of seeing non-place as a means to another end, namely of arriving at the destination, Bauman is suggesting that the fluid state itself has become the end. The goal is not to arrive, but to keep on moving. Stability became liability.

### **The Question of Identity in Liquid Modernity**

Unlike Augé’s impression that identity is either present or absent, Bauman sees

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<sup>354</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

identity as a task that was “a problem from its birth [in modernity].”<sup>356</sup> When one is not sure where to belong, identity is “a name given to the escape sought from that uncertainty.”<sup>357</sup> The question of who one is therefore only arises when there are options from which to choose from. In the context of modernity, Bauman writes:

[H]uman nature, once seen as a lasting and non-[negotiable] legacy of one-off divine creation, has been thrown, together with the rest of divine creation, into the melting pot. No more was it seen – no more could it be seen – as a ‘given’. Instead, it has turned into a *task*, and a task which every man and woman had no choice but to face up to and perform to the best of their ability.<sup>358</sup>

During solid modernity, the task was to create a “tough, durable, reliable and trustworthy”<sup>359</sup> identity. The goal was to conform to the established patterns and to live ‘true to kind.’ Individuals might go through so-called ‘identity crises’, but the norm, according to Erik H. Erikson, was to have “a subjective sense of an invigorating sameness and continuity.”<sup>360</sup> In contrast to Erikson, Bauman suggests that ‘sameness’ and ‘continuity’ are seldom felt by today’s liquid individuals and that Erikson’s assessment is outdated.<sup>361</sup>

The conditions of identity changed with the shift from solid to liquid modernity. Bauman declares that:

In our liquid modern times the world around us is sliced into poorly coordinated fragments while our individual lives are cut into a succession of ill-connected episodes. Few if any of us can avoid the passage through more than one genuine or putative, well-integrated or ephemeral ‘community of ideas and principles’, so most of us have trouble resolving (...) the issues of [the consistency and continuity of our identity over time]. Few if any of us are exposed to just one ‘community of ideas and principles’ at a time, and so most of us have similar trouble with the issue of [coherence of what distinguishes us as persons].<sup>362</sup>

In other words, the world that Augé nostalgically longed for, of people rooted in anthropological place with consistent, continuous, and coherent identities is rare in liquid modernity. Instead, liquid lives of people need to be seen as a history of different identities adopted and discarded. Bauman further argues that in liquid modernity solid identities are not desirable for some to begin with. The aim is to

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<sup>356</sup> "From Pilgrim to Tourist - or a Short History of Identity," in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (London: Sage, 1996), 19.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>358</sup> "Identity in the Globalising World," *Social Anthropology* 9, no. 02 (2001): 122.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>360</sup> Erik H. Erikson, *Identity. Youth and Crisis* (London: Faber, 1974), 17 - 19.

<sup>361</sup> Bauman, "Identity in the Globalising World," 126.

<sup>362</sup> Bauman and Vecchi, *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*, 13.



keep as many options open and to not tie oneself down in order to not regret one's decision later.<sup>363</sup>

Identity becomes liquid modernity's dilemma: On the one hand, "longing for identity comes from the desire for security. (...) [F]loating around without support in a poorly defined space, in a stubbornly, vexingly 'betwixt-and-between' location, becomes in the long run an unnerving and anxiety-prone condition."<sup>364</sup> On the other hand, "a fixed position amidst the infinity of possibilities is not an attractive prospect either. (...) To sum up: 'to identify oneself with...' means to give hostages to an unknown fate which one cannot influence, let alone control."<sup>365</sup> Liquid people want to escape the uncertainty of being liquid and long for the comfort of solidly belonging to some place. At the same time, they dread the possibility of becoming stale, of losing their freedom and creativity in their solid confinement.

Identity is thus not a straightforward process of creating or inheriting who one is. Bauman suggests that for denizens of liquid modernity instead of speaking about *identity* it would be more suitable to speak about *identification*, which is "a never-ending, always incomplete, unfinished and open-ended activity in which we all, by necessity or by choice, are engaged."<sup>366</sup> Similarly, the denizens of non-place should not think of their identity in terms of a firm place but think of it as the activity of engaging with people and groups that flow through the life of the globally mobile person.

### **From Pilgrim to Tourist**

Augé contrasts the destination oriented pilgrim with the solitary consumer tourist. Similarly, Bauman compares the identity building of solid modernity to a pilgrimage. A pilgrimage is seen as progress towards a destination or goal. Progress must go on as long as there is a distance between the goal, i.e. future identity, and the present, i.e. the place and current identity of the wanderer.<sup>367</sup> The distance meant a delay in gratification and provided the motivation for identity-building. Life was thus directional, continuous, and unbendable. Although the life of the pilgrim leaves the impression of a liquid state of being, it is only possible in solid modernity. Bauman

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<sup>363</sup> Bauman, "Identity in the Globalising World," 126.

<sup>364</sup> Bauman and Vecchi, *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*, 29.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 29 - 30.

<sup>366</sup> Bauman, "Identity in the Globalising World."

<sup>367</sup> "From Pilgrim to Tourist - or a Short History of Identity," 21 - 22.

elaborates:

Pilgrims had a stake in [the] solidity of the world they walked; in a kind of world in which one can tell life as a continuous story, a 'sense making' story, such a story as makes each event the effect of the event before and the cause of the event after, each age a station on the road pointing towards fulfillment. The world of pilgrims – of *identity-builders* – must be orderly, determined, predictable, ensured; but above all it must be a kind of world in which footprints are engraved for good so that the trace and the record of past travels are kept and preserved.<sup>368</sup>

The relative freedom to build one's identity and to actually make lasting progress was guaranteed by the solidity of the structures surrounding the pilgrim.

Furthermore, although the pilgrim can be in a liquid, liminal state, it is only meant to be temporary until the final solid identity strived for is achieved. The goal of what one ought to be is thus solid.

The challenge for the pilgrim is how to keep track of and preserve the progress that has been made. With the increasing liquidity of structures surrounding identity-building, this is becoming increasingly difficult. Bauman describes liquid modernity as a "world inhospitable to pilgrims"<sup>369</sup> due to its transient nature. Whereas the solid world of rootedness in anthropological place was predictable and regular, the liquid world of non-place is in constant flux causing "the rules of the game to keep changing long before the game is finished."<sup>370</sup> Durability and commitment to a set of rules then become a liability instead of an advantage. Whereas in solid modernity the driving question is how one can construct a meaningful identity and maintain it, in liquid modernity the question is primarily how one can avoid fixation and keep one's options open.<sup>371</sup> To illustrate this, Bauman lists a set of 'Do Nots' that have become the rule of thumb for liquid identification:

Do not plan your trips too long – the shorter the trip, the greater the chance of completing it; do not get emotionally attached to people you meet at the stopover – the less you care about them, the less it will cost you to move on; do not commit yourself too strongly to people, places, causes – you cannot know how long they will last or how long you will count them worthy of your commitment; (...) Above all, do not delay gratification.<sup>372</sup>

Liquid persons are thus free as long as they remain liquid. Freedom to commit, to care, to make long term goals are not included in liquidity.

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 23 - 26.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 25.

In contrast with the pilgrim of solid modernity, Bauman gives four metaphors that each describe aspects of the denizen of liquid modernity: the stroller, the vagabond, the tourist, and the player.<sup>373</sup> Each of these characters is a potential outcome for TCKs and thus warrants a closer look.

First, the stroller's life is one without commitment or deep engagement. Encounters with strangers remain episodic and without impact. Pleasures of modern life are enjoyed without consequences and without the need for courage. The best places for strolling are non-places, where anonymity protects the "totally private, secure, locked and burglar-proof world of the lonely nomad."<sup>374</sup> Impulsive and undirected curiosity drives the stroller. Blending in with the crowd without being of the crowd is the stroller's strength. Unlike the pilgrim, commitment is shunned and consequences are dreaded.

Second, the masterless, free-roaming vagabonds pride themselves in escaping local control and authority. The vagabond is unpredictable and directionless. Unlike the pilgrim the vagabond has no destination and "wherever the vagabond goes, he is a stranger; he can never be 'the native', the 'settled one', one with 'roots in the soil'"<sup>375</sup> Rather than settling down like a pilgrim at the end of their journey or invisibly blending in like the stroller, the 'out-of-placeness' of the vagabond is insisted on.

Three, the tourist is similar to the vagabond in that they visit places in order to remain strangers. However, tourists move purposefully in order to gain novel often exotic experiences for excitement and amusement. Key to the tourist is safety. The exotic other must be tamed, domesticated and no longer frightening. Furthermore, unlike vagabonds, tourists have a more complicated relation to 'home.' For the tourist, "having a home is part of the safety package."<sup>376</sup> Home, however, becomes more and more obscure for the tourist with every subsequent move to another exciting location. Eventually it becomes "a dream of belonging"<sup>377</sup> that is perpetually deferred into the future. Unlike the pilgrim, gratification is not to be delayed, and unlike the vagabond, real risks are never taken.

Finally, for the player the events in the world are moves in an endless cycle of

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<sup>373</sup> Ibid., 26 - 32.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

successive games. The world itself is an adversary in the game. A successful player stays ahead of the game. Each game has a clear ending and beginning so that “it should not ‘spill over’ into the time after: as far as later games are concerned, no game played before must handicap, privilege or otherwise determine the players – *be of consequence*.”<sup>378</sup> No game has lasting consequences and everything is understood to be just a game, thus leaving no grudges or scars behind. Life is a series of games with no consequences. Unlike a pilgrimage, life as a game is competitive but also not truly real.

These four metaphors for the denizen of liquid modernity have several aspects in common. Human relations are fragmented, responsibilities are avoided, and distance between the individual and the other are promoted. The four caricatures, however, cannot be integrated into a cohesive way of life. Here, liquid life is too incoherent and messy to expect clear cut life strategies.<sup>379</sup> Each person might react differently to liquidity. Anyhow, Bauman here presents far reaching consequences of the uncertainties of identifying in a liquid world. The freedom of being liquid, of being liminal and belonging to non-place, comes with the risk of non-engagement. Rootlessness and restlessness can become aloofness. If from Augé’s perspective of anthropological place a person in non-place are ‘non-person’ without recognizable identity, community, and history, then similarly Bauman makes the case that for the liquid person believing to only be alive in perpetual mobility the solid person is ‘non-person’ who has surrendered their life to mortal solidity.

Bauman’s discussion on liquid modernity highlights two important points. First, Bauman points out that “the styles once practiced by marginal people in marginal time-stretches and marginal places, are now practiced by the majority in the prime time of their lives and in places central to their life-world.”<sup>380</sup> Thus, what might have been strategies of select liminal and marginal individuals have become the new norm in liquid modernity. TCKs are thus not out of place after all but forerunners of a liquid world that is only slowly coming to terms with itself. Second, Bauman’s makes the case that the task of identifying in liquid modernity has a negative side of disassociation. Commitments make the liquid person liable and therefore in order to remain mobile the person seems to have no choice but to remain

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

aloof. In Bauman's description of the stroller, the vagabond, the tourist, and the player we have a powerful critique of TCKs. Liminality can lead to disregarding the local others and risks alienating everyone else.

### **Liquid Modernity and Third Culture Kids**

The fragmented life of TCKs, high mobility, cultural incoherence, rootlessness, and restlessness correspond to the conditions of liquid modernity. Structures and categories that might have previously been solid for non-TCKs, such as 'home', 'cultural identity', 'friendship', 'motherland', 'mother tongue' to mention a few, have melted and become liquid for the TCK. Loyalties to countries, primary languages, network of friends, the sense of belonging, and ultimately the answer to the question 'Who am I?' can easily change with a single airplane ride. Bauman suggests that TCKs prefer not to have a solid identity and yet are tormented by the hidden need for security and recognition as Kathleen Gilbert has observed through the experiences of losses and grief among TCKs.<sup>381</sup> Characteristics of TCKs such as confused loyalties<sup>382</sup>, avoidance of commitment<sup>383</sup> are reflected in the four caricatures presented by Bauman.

The picture presented by Bauman of liquid modernity dominated by the strollers, vagabonds, tourists, and players proves unsatisfactory even to Bauman himself. Bauman sees a risk of "unstoppable experimentation" when it comes to trying out new identities in the condition of liquid modernity. He explains that "[e]xperiments never end. You try one identity at a time, but so many others, as yet untried, wait around the corner for you to pick them up. Many more undreamt-of identities are still to be invented and coveted in your lifetime."<sup>384</sup> The risk of never being able to settle for who one is, is real for the restless TCK always anticipating the next move. Commitment issues arise for such liquid TCKs.<sup>385</sup> Liquidity can mean the possibility of freely choosing one's form at will. However, liquidity can

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<sup>381</sup> Gilbert, "Loss and Grief between and among Cultures: The Experience of Third Culture Kids."; Kathleen R. Gilbert and Rebecca J. Gilbert, "Echoes of Loss: Long-Term Grief and Adaptation among Third Culture Kids," in *Writing out of Limbo: International Childhoods, Global Nomads and Third Culture Kids*, ed. Gene H. Bell-Villada, et al. (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2011).

<sup>382</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 90-92.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-08.

<sup>384</sup> Bauman and Vecchi, *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*, 85.

<sup>385</sup> Anastasia Aldelina Lijadi and Gertina J. Van Schalkwyk, "Narratives of Third Culture Kids: Commitment and Reticence in Social Relationships," *The Qualitative Report* 19, no. 25 (2014).

become encapsulating and paralyzing.<sup>386</sup> In such a case, the liquid person would thus be pushed and pulled by whatever current might be the strongest.

Furthermore, the degree of freedom implied in the above quote can be misleading. Even though Bauman gives the impression that liquid individuals have the flexibility to, for at least the moment, become whomever they want to be, Augé reminds us that some options are denied. Ethnic, political, financial, or racial reasons prevent TCKs to freeze their liquid state into a solid identity and to actually be someone accepted and recognized by others as a real 'person' as opposed to a 'non-person'. For example, the fluid Caucasian TCK who grew up in Japan might want to choose to become a solid Japanese person, but have this option denied by the Japanese government and be regularly reminded of their alien status by the relative yet obvious difference in skin colour. For some TCKs, to remain fluid, i.e. to remain permanently liminal, to be at home in non-place is not only the only familiar way of life but the only reasonable option.

The question is thus how TCKs can remain liminal, liquid, and in non-place without resorting to fruitless experimentation, falling into encapsulating paralysis, or attempting to escape to a nostalgic solidity that might never be an option. Bauman's picture of liquid modernity thus still seems rather bleak for the TCK. What is clear, however, is that solid structures still remain as powerful constructs dominating the task of identifying. The interplay between anthropological place and non-place can equally be observed along the lines of solid and liquid structures. The TCK's struggle arises from being in between solid and liquid states, at home in any anthropological place but simultaneously a denizen of non-place. Just as the liminal state is sustained by the gravitational pulls of both the preliminal and postliminal other, and non-place arises only because it happens to be on the route connecting anthropological places, so liquidity also only exists as the intentional antithesis to solidity. Solid structures shape and mould liquid. TCKs being both a part of and apart from solid structures are both solid and liquid: Solid in terms of the places they happen to be in, the language they use, the behaviour they adopt; but liquid in terms of the way they flow back and forth between solid-seeming states with surprising ease and flexibility.

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<sup>386</sup> Schaetti, "Phoenix Rising: A Question of Cultural Identity."

## Conclusion

This chapter has used Bauman's liquid modernity as a tool to better understand TCKs' predicament. Liquidity and its pitfalls present a powerful critique of TCKs who in their marginality become encapsulated and waste their potential floating around. Rather than engage TCKs can become trapped in the comfort of remaining a 'wallflower' or like the vagabond feel the need to actively distance themselves from all others ('screamers').<sup>387</sup>

What is needed is a way to distinguish between fruitful ways and crippling ways of living in liminality. Rather than merely being 'neither/nor' or 'apart from', how can TCKs also be 'both/and' as well as 'a part of' their surrounding world? How can TCKs engage with the world as TCKs without having to give up their uniqueness?

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<sup>387</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 57.

## Chapter 11

### Constructive Marginality and Third Culture Kids

#### Introduction

The discussion of non-place and liquid modernity has served to give words to the frustration and struggles that TCKs experience in their liminality. While glimpses of creative possibilities have shone through, the discussion's mood has remained rather pessimistic. It is time to show that liminality need not be negative. Janet Bennett's distinction between 'encapsulated marginality' and 'constructive marginality'<sup>388</sup> will serve this purpose. This chapter discusses Bennett's marginality as encapsulated and constructive and gives two examples of a constructive marginality: Muneo Yoshikawa's 'dynamic in-betweenness'<sup>389</sup> and Stephen Bochner et al.'s 'mediating person'<sup>390</sup>.

#### Marginality

When describing the four caricatures of liquid modernity Zygmunt Bauman remarks that "styles once practised by marginal people in marginal time-stretches and marginal places, are now practised by the majority in the prime time of their lives and in places central to their life-world; they have become now, fully and truly, life styles."<sup>391</sup> All four thus exhibit characteristics of marginality. Marginals who used to be banned to the far off margins of powerful and influential solid structures such as race, class, gender, nationality, and ethnicity have with the progressive melting of these structures moved towards the centre of society. Being in between categories itself has become a way of life. Whereas before the solid continents of anthropological place were the centre, now it is the liquid ocean, non-place, between shrinking solid structural islands that have become the new centres of these times. Marginal people with their liquidity are filling the gaps opened by the receding,

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<sup>388</sup> Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training." See also: Schaetti, "Phoenix Rising: A Question of Cultural Identity."

<sup>389</sup> Muneo J. Yoshikawa, "The Double Swing Model of Intercultural Communication between the East and the West," in *Communication Theory: Eastern and Western Perspectives*, ed. D. Lawrence Kincaid (London: Academic Press, 1987); "Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Perceptual Development," in *Cross-Cultural Adaptation Current Approaches*, ed. Young Yun Kim and William B. Gudykunst (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1987).

<sup>390</sup> Stephen Bochner, ed. *The Mediating Person: Bridges between Cultures* (Boston, Massachusetts: G.K. Hall, 1981).

<sup>391</sup> Bauman, "From Pilgrim to Tourist - or a Short History of Identity," 26.



melting solids. Bennett has shed further light on the liquid modern condition of marginality by distinguishing between “encapsulated marginality” and “constructive marginality.”<sup>392</sup>

Bennett draws on the classic marginal literature found in Robert Park<sup>393</sup>, Everett Stonequist<sup>394</sup>, and Milton Goldberg<sup>395</sup> to develop her dual approach to contemporary cultural marginality found in disparate groups such as refugees, immigrants, TCKs, multicultural people, adult sojourners and minorities among other groups. What these groups have in common are issues of self-concept and identity.<sup>396</sup> Bennett defines cultural marginality as “a cultural lifestyle at the edges of where two or more cultures meet”<sup>397</sup> and emphasizes that it is a conflict of competing cultures “within oneself.”<sup>398</sup> Cultural marginality is thus a self-contradiction. As the classic literature on marginality points out this can lead to “powerlessness, isolation, anxiety, insecurity, ambivalence, self-consciousness, malaise, and self-doubt”<sup>399</sup>, characteristics that find resonance in liminality, non-place, as well as liquid modernity. Bennett argues that responses to marginality can be either encapsulated or constructive.

### **Encapsulated Marginality**

Bennett defines encapsulating cultural marginality as follows: “When a person responds to this internal dialog with a compromised ability to establish boundaries and make judgments, we can say that the individual is ‘encapsulated’ or trapped by marginality. The encapsulated marginal is a person who is buffeted by conflicting cultural loyalties and unable to construct a unified identity.”<sup>400</sup> The internalized conflict between solid cultural structures that torments the liquid person results in disjunction, conflicting loyalties, loose boundary control, and “[give] decision making the character of a trial-and-error effort.”<sup>401</sup> Different roles and identities are

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<sup>392</sup> Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training."

<sup>393</sup> Park, "Human Migration and the Marginal Man."

<sup>394</sup> Everett V. Stonequist, "The Problem of the Marginal Man," *ibid.* 41, no. 1 (1935).

<sup>395</sup> Milton M. Goldberg, "A Qualification of the Marginal Man Theory," *American Sociological Review* 6, no. 1 (1941).

<sup>396</sup> Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training," 111.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

tried or enforced by others and discarded. Lines between the self and the other are unclear and commitments to causes are unreliable.

The encapsulated marginal experiences “a sense of alienation described variously as including powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, cultural estrangement, self-estrangement, social isolation, anomie, or anxiety.”<sup>402</sup> In such circumstances, establishing enduring goals, clear values, or strong personal attachments prove immensely challenging for encapsulated marginals. The incapability of finding a peer group can lead to the state of perceived irresolvable “terminal uniqueness.”<sup>403</sup> When forced to conform by powerful solid social institutions, the assigned role can feel inauthentic and ultimately pointless. Like Bauman’s player figure every action is merely a move in a yet another meaningless game. Under such circumstances feeling truly at home is impossible.

Bennett’s encapsulated marginal and Bauman’s liquid person share several important characteristics. First, both speak of the inability to find a peer group as an important factor.<sup>404</sup> Bennett writes that “[t]he sense of being alone with this cultural-identity struggle often causes marginal people to feel detached from all reference groups.”<sup>405</sup> For the encapsulated marginal as well as the liquid person, there are no stable orientation points and no reference group. However, Bennett remarks that “[m]any [marginals] are frequently unaware of the existence of a global community of [marginals] with whom they might identify”<sup>406</sup> suggesting that peer groups can play a role even in marginality. Second, both describe the lack of commitment to enduring solid roles. Bennett writes of commitments as a process of “trial-and-error”<sup>407</sup> and Bauman speaks of “instoppable experimentation.”<sup>408</sup> For Bauman this is a matter of wanting to keep as many options as possible open as well as of the dilemma between security and freedom. Bennett observes that this is due to the attempt to satisfy the conflicting demands of not yet melted solid social constructs, suggesting that power of anthropological place over non-place plays an influential role as Marc Augé’s<sup>409</sup> critical discussion of non-place shows. Overall, the world of

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<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

<sup>404</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 7.

<sup>405</sup> Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training," 116.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>408</sup> Bauman and Vecchi, *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*, 85.

<sup>409</sup> Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*.

marginals that Bennett presupposes is a mixture of liquid and solid constructions that create internal confusion and conflicts leading to encapsulation.

### **From Encapsulating to Constructive Marginality**

Bennett adapts William Perry's intellectual and ethical development model<sup>410</sup> to examine cultural marginality. According to Bennett, Perry suggests that there are four successive stages of development: dualism, multiplicity, contextual relativism, commitment to relativism.<sup>411</sup>

First, cultural dualism sees norms and values dictated by authority figures and is deeply ethnocentric. Dualism is rigid in its structure and belongs to the categories of anthropological place and solid modernity. A person is either *this* or *that*. Second, multiplicity is marked by confusion and conflict as can be seen in encapsulated marginality. Bennett writes that "[t]he 'terminal uniqueness' posture of the encapsulated marginal fosters multiplicity, where ambiguity seems overwhelming and strongly stated opinions seem prejudicial or biased."<sup>412</sup> Norms and values are still recognized as solid structures and therefore cause conflicting perspectives leading to the loss of agency.

Third, contextual relativism shifts norms and values from the solid to the liquid. Marginals come to terms with ambiguity and freely adjust frames of reference according to the demands of the context. Decisions are driven by the relative context. However, commitments only last as long as the situation does. Marginals become aloof and unreliable. Bauman's tourist, stroller, vagabond, and player fall into this developmental stage of indifference. Fourth, Bennett argues that marginals can arrive at commitment in relativism. Bennett suggests that "[h]ere choice is an accepted responsibility. (...) The cultural marginal who can master this stage has become a constructive marginal, capable of constructing identity and making commitments in the face of ambiguity."<sup>413</sup> The marginality is thus acknowledged and owned by the marginal. A constructive commitment to 'in-betweenness' replaces confused loyalties between differing solid norms and values and indifference.

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<sup>410</sup> William G. Perry, *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970).

<sup>411</sup> Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training," 116 - 17; See also: Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 110-12.

<sup>412</sup> Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training," 117.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid.

### Constructive Marginality

In contrast to encapsulated marginality, Bennett describes constructive marginality as follows: “[B]y maintaining control of choice and the construction of boundaries, a person may become a ‘constructive’ marginal. A constructive marginal is a person who is able to construct context intentionally and consciously for the purpose of creating his or her own identity.”<sup>414</sup> Constructive marginals form clear boundaries, become self-reflective, feel authentic in their roles, and recognize that “one is never *not* at home in the world.”<sup>415</sup> According to Bennett this realization comes from “the acknowledgement that one does indeed have a peer group. It is not fellow members of one’s own culture, but rather a group of fellow marginals with whom one has more in common than with anyone else.”<sup>416</sup> Identifying a peer group of marginals helps normalize the experience of liminality. Indeed, higher affirmation, belonging, and commitment to an in-between identity correlate with higher self-esteem, reflecting a constructive transaction of marginality, and lower cultural homelessness, i.e. encapsulated marginality.<sup>417</sup> Comfort can be achieved by intentionally owning the non-space one inhabits and creating familiarity by oneself.<sup>418</sup> Marginality can then constructively be seen as one’s ‘home’.

Bennett argues that the marginal needs to resolve two essential developmental tasks in reaching the stage of constructive marginality: integration of identity and personal commitment.<sup>419</sup> First, Bennett suggests that fragmentation needs integration. The marginal needs to come to terms with the multiplicity of frames of reference. Secondly, Bennett argues that personal commitment to acting responsibly while tolerating ambiguity and paradox are required of the constructive marginal.

In order to develop a constructive marginality Bennett suggests a double epistemology that involves “a separate epistemology” and “a connected epistemology.”<sup>420</sup> In other words, Bennett argues that constructive marginals ought to both doubt and believe what is being confronted. In doubting, the marginal confronts the other as ‘Other’. In believing, the marginal identifies with the other,

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<sup>414</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

<sup>417</sup> Hoersting and Jenkins, “No Place to Call Home: Cultural Homelessness, Self-Esteem and Cross-Cultural Identities.”

<sup>418</sup> J. Macgregor Wise, “Home: Territory and Identity,” *Cultural Studies* 14, no. 2 (2000).

<sup>419</sup> Bennett, “Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training,” 120 - 21.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid., 125.

thus shifting frames of reference and entertaining multiple perspectives. The constructive marginal should see themselves as both 'being a part from' and 'apart of' the situation, transcending the demands of the situation in one sense, yet immersing oneself in the situation in another sense.

Furthermore, Bennett suggests marginals ought to see themselves in terms of "self-as-process" rather than "self-as-object."<sup>421</sup> Bennett explains that "[w]atching the self and becoming a collectivity of intrapersonal impressions of one's own fluid identity are hazards of marginality."<sup>422</sup> Instead of becoming mere passive observers, marginals ought to see themselves as agents who take the initiative to act. Marginality must be actively owned rather than merely passively recognized.

TCK Barbara Schaetti's own experience serves as a good illustration of realizing one's constructive marginality through the discovery of agency and a peer group. Schaetti writes about herself:

I went to graduate school, studied intercultural conflict management, and trained to be a mediator. My studies and subsequent work as a corporate consultant helped me learn to use my marginality constructively, to help me become a part of society rather than apart from it.

I found my marginality benefited me (...).

I could move in and out, between and among conflicting parties, building bridges across their differences, but never settling firmly on one side or another, in one place or another. I was introduced in my late twenties to the concept of global nomads (...) and found a community with whom I belong. (...) As I get older I am evolving a personal truth to which I am fully committed, while maintaining my ability to appreciate the truths of others.<sup>423</sup>

In the role as mediator, Schaetti states that she has found a way to shape her own marginality in a positive way. Bennett concurs as she argues that "[t]he combination of multiple frames of reference, connected and separate knowing, and commitment in the context of relativism makes an ideal background for a rational, empathetic go-between."<sup>424</sup> In other words, we can make the case that due to the very flexibility to move between different frames of references, constructive marginals have the potential to act as intermediaries. As such they are committed to their very fluidity, purposefully filling the gaps between solids, using their fluidity to gently embrace solid structures, and flexibly taking on shapes and forms without being consumed by them.

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<sup>421</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>423</sup> Schaetti, "Phoenix Rising: A Question of Cultural Identity," 185 - 86.

<sup>424</sup> Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training."

In terms of non-place, constructive marginals can intentionally carve out non-places to make interaction between anthropological places possible. Non-places then become mediating places. In fact, in a sense constructive marginals who sustain fluidity and construct non-places are in turn liberating anthropological place from its encapsulating solidity providing the flexibility and room, the neutral non-place, for the eye-opening encounter between different anthropologically rooted people.

This constructive approach is conditional on what Schaetti termed 'personal truth' which holds up in the face of relativism.<sup>425</sup> Bennett suggests that in order to develop a constructive marginality marginals must come to terms with the reality that "all knowledge is constructed"<sup>426</sup> and must construct whatever frame of reference to be adopted by themselves. Schaetti elaborates on Bennett's idea:

Bennett argues that the single most important ingredient in building a constructive experience of marginality is developing a sense of one's own truth. Certainly it is valuable to be able to understand different truths as represented in different cultures, to withhold judgement and interpretation. That is part of the global nomad's birthright. At the same time, however it is important for the adult global nomad to plant his or her feet in personal truth, one not dependent on circumstance.<sup>427</sup>

In other words, the liquid person needs to find a frame of reference which is not dependent on any solid constructs that he or she is negotiating between in order to remain both liquid and committed. Schaetti argues that liquid persons must find a set of personal truths that are faithful to liquidity itself, a personal truth that holds true regardless of the cultural contexts in which the liquid person finds him or herself. This means that, for example, a theological understanding of one's identity and purpose can serve as such a personal truth to cement commitment even amid liminality.

### **Models of Constructive Marginality**

With the distinction between encapsulated and constructive marginality, it is now possible to review constructive models of marginality that seek to infuse the liquid liminal person in non-place with meaning and purpose. Two examples will serve to outline a model of mediation which fits naturally with TCKs emerging from a mediating culture. First, Muneo Yoshikawa has developed a so-called double-swing

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<sup>425</sup> Schaetti, "Phoenix Rising: A Question of Cultural Identity," 186.

<sup>426</sup> Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training," 128 - 29.

<sup>427</sup> Schaetti, "Phoenix Rising: A Question of Cultural Identity," 188.

model of dynamic in-betweenness based on Martin Buber and Buddhist concepts.<sup>428</sup> Second, Bochner et al. have proposed a model of a mediating person for bicultural and multicultural persons.<sup>429</sup>

### **(A) Muneo Yoshikawa's Dynamic In-Betweenness**

Yoshikawa addresses the concerns of Augé's supermodernity. The excess of time, place and egos has intensified intercultural encounters with the other. He proposes the double-swing model as a solution to how to construct a creative dialog between cultures, nations, and people.<sup>430</sup> He argues for a dynamic in-betweenness that transcends binary perceptions of absolute and relative, category and non-category.

The double-swing model is a dialogical mode of encounter and communication between the self and the other. It is a dynamic paradoxical relationship that simultaneously maintains independence and interdependence.<sup>431</sup> Yoshikawa draws on the philosophy of Martin Buber<sup>432</sup> and on Buddhism to develop his model. He argues that Buber proposes an integration of opposites in the I-thou relationship that is neither a unity based on the absorption of both opposites nor an elimination of one opposite. Instead, "it is a kind of integration in which two sides of the pole cannot be excluded."<sup>433</sup> This unity of the opposites takes place in the sphere of the between, marked by both distance and relation. Yoshikawa argues that the between is "no happy middle" but rather a "type of unity that does not eliminate the tension created between opposites. It endures the contradictions between basic potentiality and apparent duality"<sup>434</sup> and is thus both a monistic world of unity and a dualistic world of separation, but neither of these if taken separately.

Yoshikawa adds insights from the Buddhistic concept of the 'Middle Way', which views reality neither absolutely nor relatively but recognizes the paradoxical nature of the world. Yoshikawa writes that according to Buddhism "the world is

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<sup>428</sup> Yoshikawa, "Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Perceptual Development."; "The Double Swing Model of Intercultural Communication between the East and the West."

<sup>429</sup> Bochner, *The Mediating Person: Bridges between Cultures*.

<sup>430</sup> Yoshikawa, "The Double Swing Model of Intercultural Communication between the East and the West," 319.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid., 320-21.

<sup>432</sup> Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Scribner, 1958); Martin Buber and Maurice S. Friedman, *The Knowledge of Man: Selected Essays* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1965).

<sup>433</sup> Yoshikawa, "The Double Swing Model of Intercultural Communication between the East and the West," 323.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid., 324.

viewed as a complementary interplay of the world of category and the world of noncategory.”<sup>435</sup> Thus in an encounter between two parties there are “not one, not two.”<sup>436</sup>

Yoshikawa applies these insights to intercultural encounters suggesting that two parties can find themselves in a dynamic in-betweenness that transcend binary opposition of self and other. He uses the Möbius strip or the infinity symbol ( $\infty$ ) as an illustration for the simultaneous distance and relation between two cultural positions that are at odds with each other. Yoshikawa describes the dynamics of this in-betweenness as a journey which starts at one loop of the infinity symbol, proceeds to the other side where anomalies are encountered that lead to a crisis, and finally returns to one’s initial point having transcended the binary opposition.<sup>437</sup> The sense of crisis through the encounter with the other plays an important role in Yoshikawa’s double-swing model in that it leads to the liberation of the person from a binary perception of the world.<sup>438</sup> Instead of simple opposition between two others or elimination of the other, the “unity of monism” and the “separateness of dualism” are both embraced in the double-swing model.<sup>439</sup> In Yoshikawa’s words, “[t]his model indicates that one is neither this side nor that side nor both sides, but one is the between. This position (...) is a dynamic, tension-laden ‘between’ in which there is a constant pull from both sides of the pole. (...) [O]ne feels keenly alive.”<sup>440</sup>

By seeing beyond the apparent binary opposition between the self and the other, between absolute reality and relative reality, between solid states and liquid states, the person can take the initiative to create a space between and around these opposites marked by openness, sensitivity, responsiveness, and also vulnerability. Yoshikawa thus sees the margins of structures, where encounters with the other take place as creative spaces. Thus, “[i]ndividuals who are in the double-swing state are able to accept and draw nourishment from their first as well as second culture.”<sup>441</sup> Bennett remarks that this dynamic in-betweenness is a constructive marginality as it suggests a comfortable flowing movement between solid cultural identities where integrated, multicultural existence is maintained and a frame of reference that lets

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<sup>435</sup> Ibid., 325.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid.

<sup>437</sup> "Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Perceptual Development," 146 - 48.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>439</sup> "The Double Swing Model of Intercultural Communication between the East and the West," 326.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>441</sup> "Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Perceptual Development," 147.



one make decisions prevails.<sup>442</sup> Tension and contradiction are not to be resolved and eliminated but maintained and utilized as a catalyst for creativity that transcends binary opposition.

Thus, Yoshikawa presents a model for constructive marginality. Its strengths lie in the creative use of the space 'between' in which one actively seeks to create meaning not in isolation but in relation with the other. It goes beyond the detachment of liquid individuals who are trapped in a neither/nor world and live in binary opposition between competing solid and liquid identities. The marginal ought to feel the contradiction in the tension of being in between. Contradictions are not to be avoided but embraced. This 'unhappy middle' pushes the person into action. Yoshikawa ascribes a concrete purpose to the dynamic in-betweenness, namely that of relating with the other. However, Yoshikawa focuses heavily on the individual. Instead of mediating between two cultures, Yoshikawa's model addresses the encounter of the self with the other. The mediating constructive marginal is thus not truly in-between two others but merely relating the self with the other.

### **(B) The Mediating Person**

A lesser known further example of constructive marginality, more relevant to TCKs, is the model of the mediating person proposed by Bochner et al.<sup>443</sup> This section will focus on the contributions by Stephen Bochner<sup>444</sup>, Beverly McLeod<sup>445</sup>, and Ronald Taft<sup>446</sup> in describing the contours of the mediating person.

Stephen Bochner defines mediating persons as follows: "[c]ultural mediators are men and women who function as links between diverse cultural systems."<sup>447</sup> The purpose of mediating between two or more cultural parties is "mutual growth which also preserves the integrity of each participating culture."<sup>448</sup> Bochner sees two threats behind the need for better mediators. First, there is "the tendency for the nations and cultures of the world to meet each other in a spirit of confrontation, mutual suspicion, and exploitation."<sup>449</sup> Conflict needs to be resolved through mutual

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<sup>442</sup> Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training," 118.

<sup>443</sup> Bochner, *The Mediating Person: Bridges between Cultures*.

<sup>444</sup> "The Social Psychology of Cultural Mediation," in *The Mediating Person: Bridges between Cultures*, ed. Stephen Bochner (Boston, Massachusetts: G.K. Hall, 1981).

<sup>445</sup> Beverly McLeod, "The Mediating Person and Cultural Identity," *ibid.*

<sup>446</sup> Ronald Taft, "The Role and Personality of the Mediator," *ibid.*

<sup>447</sup> Stephen Bochner, "The Social Psychology of Cultural Mediation," *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

understanding facilitated by mediators. Second, Bochner mentions the danger to the integrity of local cultures posed by the “diffusion of innovation based on fallacious assumptions about the superiority of Western technological practices.”<sup>450</sup> Bochner argues that Western ethnocentrism, will lead to the extinction of cultural heterogeneity, a loss for the whole of humanity. ‘Mediators-as-translators’ work to eliminate bias and misunderstanding and ‘mediators-as-synthesizers’ help prevent the destruction of local cultures by not merely communicating between the parties but actively providing creative solutions of how e.g. Western ideas can be transferred into non-Western contexts.

The mediator is thus a translator and as well as a creative problem solver.<sup>451</sup> Bochner suggests that “[f]ormally, the role of the mediator as synthesizer is to create a new concept out of the various elements that were previously parts of different worlds. The product will be a new configuration that incorporates and harmonizes these elements, but is different from the sum of its parts.”<sup>452</sup> Successful mediators are capable of integrating the various conflicting elements at a higher level. While showing competence in the participating parties, the mediator remains an impartial broker who represents one side to the other but who ultimately “belong[s] to a transcultural reference group whose norms transcend national and cultural barriers.”<sup>453</sup> The translating and synthesizing mediator while heavily involved remains marginal to all participants.

Bochner contrasts the mediator figure with the ‘marginal man’ described by Everett Stonequist.<sup>454</sup> Bochner argues:

Unlike the mediating person, who can be thought of as *linking* two or more groups, the marginal person is someone who has *fallen between* the various social systems. His problem consists of a simultaneous identification with two conflicting or incompatible reference groups, with the result that he belongs to neither culture.<sup>455</sup>

The difference between the marginal man and mediator lies in intention and agency. Unlike the encapsulated ‘marginal man’, the mediator is an active agent who seeks to integrate differences through coordination and reconciliation.<sup>456</sup> Mediators show

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<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>454</sup> Stonequist, "The Problem of the Marginal Man."

<sup>455</sup> Bochner, "The Social Psychology of Cultural Mediation," 17.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

control over their accepted responsibilities and succeed in funnelling their marginality into creativity.

Bochner argues that in order to produce more mediators rather than encapsulated marginals “the mediating person must have social support (...) and a reference group.”<sup>457</sup> What Bochner has in mind is precisely third culture, a “*culture of multiculturality*.”<sup>458</sup> Ideal mediators are “individuals who by accident of their birth were raised simultaneously in more than one culture.”<sup>459</sup> Supporting TCKs to develop their liminal skills and helping them find others of similar background helps create constructive mediators.

Beverly McLeod adds further insight into factors that produce outstanding mediators. She argues that merely being multicultural does not guarantee one is a successful mediator.<sup>460</sup> McLeod discusses the question of acceptance of the mediator by the participants concluding that “[i]t is necessary for the mediator to convince people that the unusual is not inherently threatening, and may even be interesting and beneficial.”<sup>461</sup> Different cultures might perceive the mediator as an outside threat to their stability and it is in the mediator’s own interest to shape the participant’s perception of themselves.

McLeod also acknowledges that the mediator is in no easy place due to the in-between position. In order to avoid becoming an encapsulated marginal, mediators need to be able to smoothly shift between cultural contexts. McLeod writes that “[b]eing a successful mediator may require a good deal of cognitive juggling and perhaps a certain amount of abstraction from, or objectivity of perspective on, one’s activity and habits.”<sup>462</sup> The mediators must be able to remove themselves from each particular situation in which they act for assessment, yet without becoming a passive bystander. Further inner conflicts may arise in terms of language usage and values of cultures. There is the risk that “instead of being freed by his knowledge of more than one culture, the mediating person may in fact be bound by the norms of two cultures instead of just one.”<sup>463</sup> Bochner stresses that mediators need to be committed to cultural relativism, meaning the acceptance that “there is no one right way of doing

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<sup>457</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid., 19. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>460</sup> Beverly McLeod, “The Mediating Person and Cultural Identity,” *ibid.*, 40.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

things.”<sup>464</sup> McLeod agrees suggesting that “[i]f such a relativistic outlook were common, a continued diversity of life-styles, values, and approaches to human problems would be guaranteed”<sup>465</sup>, displaying a commitment to relativism that is focused on creatively solving problems rather than being avoiding problems in their marginality.

In terms of an ideal mediator, McLeod names Edwin O. Reischauer<sup>466</sup> as an example.<sup>467</sup> Reischauer, a TCK, was born in 1910 to American missionaries in Tokyo and during his life acted as a mediator between Japan and the USA, first as a leading scholar of the history and culture of Japan at Harvard University and later as the US ambassador to Japan. Reischauer served as a link between two cultures. McLeod argues that an objective perspective is crucial to the mediator negotiating between cultures. This is significant in two ways. First, the mediator must objectify one perspective in order to present it to the other side. Second, the mediator must in a sense remain an outsider, an ‘other’ who confronts and enters. In McLeod’s words “[t]he mediator should be like a poet, who takes familiar words and allows the reader to see them in a new and different manner.”<sup>468</sup> While showing competence in the participating cultures, the mediator thus operates on the threshold, providing an objective point of view through which participants can see themselves as well as the others in an altogether new way. In other words, the mediator as a native faithfully represents both parties while as an outsider belongs to neither party.

Ronald Taft stresses the mediator’s dual competence illustrated by the phrase “two skills in one skull.”<sup>469</sup> ‘Skill’ highlights how mediation is a constructive marginality that involving agency and initiative around a specific task. Taft sees a mediator between two cultures as someone who is able to participate to some extent in both cultures stating that the “ideal situation for mediation between cultures would almost certainly require the bicultural person to be highly identified with each one.”<sup>470</sup> At the same time Taft mentions that while being competent in both cultures, “the mediator must be able to transcend the cultures concerned.”<sup>471</sup> Taft’s point

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<sup>464</sup> Stephen Bochner, "The Social Psychology of Cultural Mediation," *ibid.*, 14.

<sup>465</sup> Beverly McLeod, "The Mediating Person and Cultural Identity," *ibid.*, 51.

<sup>466</sup> Edwin O. Reischauer, *My Life between Japan and America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986).

<sup>467</sup> McLeod, "The Mediating Person and Cultural Identity," 50.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>469</sup> Ronald Taft, "The Role and Personality of the Mediator," *ibid.*, 53.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

comes out more clearly in his comments on world-mindedness, i.e. global outlook. He suggests that the primary reference group of a world-minded person would be humanity rather than one specific culture.<sup>472</sup> Recognizing the underlying human unity between parties in conflict benefits mediation. A global outlook lets the mediator experience being part of something bigger than the local particularities.

Bochner et al. thus present a model of marginality marked by a clear constructive purpose. The marginal person becomes a link between cultures, enriching the cultures but also protecting the cultures' integrity from exploitation or elimination. Rather than Yoshikawa's I-thou dynamic in-betweenness, here we have a model that sees the marginal as a facilitator between two others. The mediator's identity lies in serving multiple others.

Strong emphasis is put on dual competence and identification which are not only seen as possible but as desirable. At the same time cultural relativism is a requirement and a reference group other than one of the cultures being mediated is recommended. The mediator must identify with the reconciled parties (both/and) as well as remain detached from them (neither/nor). This is in order to ensure the best possible representation of one party to the other as well as to maintain objectivity and flexibility.

This model of the mediating person fits TCKs for whom mediating between first and second culture comes naturally. The mediator model encourages multiple identification for the clear purpose of serving the first and second culture equally and for their own benefit but also stresses the need to transcend the immediate context and remain an impartial outsider in order to remain free and flexible. Being impartial, however, does not mean the mediator is not committed to mediation. Mediation seeks to overcome encapsulated marginality by supplementing simple relativism with a commitment to mediation and allegiance to humanity.

### **Conclusion: Third Culture Kids as Mediating Persons**

This chapter has reviewed two models of constructive marginality each expressing a more or less clear picture of mediating. Both models maintain Bennett's distinction between a separate and connected epistemology, insisting that the dynamic person in-between and the mediator both need to identify with the other(s) (relation) as well

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<sup>472</sup> Ibid., 82 -83.

as remain separate from the other(s) (distance). For TCKs this means intentionally being both a part of different contexts but also remaining apart from all relative contexts.

The control of choice and construction of boundaries Bennett insists on find their concrete expression in TCKs seeing themselves as agents rather than victims. Both for Yoshikawa and for Bochner et al. taking the initiative to stand in between or to be the mediator are important to creating a constructive marginality.

Yoshikawa suggests that by existing in the dynamic in-between TCKs can acknowledge both the importance of belonging to an anthropological place and conforming to solid structures while also insisting on belonging to non-place and remaining liquid. The in-betweenness holds these two in tension. TCKs are encouraged to learn languages, develop cultural competence, and engage others but need not let go of their creative freedom to belong nowhere and remain shapeless.

As Bochner et al. argue TCKs are especially apt to become global mediators since they are able to unify different, and even conflicting, cultural skills in 'one skull,' within their person. While acting as a link in between is no happy middle, Bochner et al. present a way that the TCK's unique position can benefit others. There can be meaning and purpose to the TCK's liminality in mediation. Barbara Schaetti is not the only person to have discovered a natural talent for mediation. Many TCKs choose to continue to be involved internationally and facilitate understanding across borders.<sup>473</sup> Constructive marginality is a lived experience of many TCKs who have discovered their potential to be involved as well as to transcend and developed a sense of agency.

By identifying labels such as 'global mediator' TCKs can find peer groups to belong to and turn their marginality into a constructive one. Of course, there needs to be a 'personal truth' behind the label that makes sense to the TCK. Commitment to relativism in mediation requires a set of principles and values that can accommodate the precarious position TCKs are in as liminal figures.

### **Bringing Part Two to a Close**

Part two has looked at the themes of transculturality, liminality, non-place, liquidity, and constructive marginality. Liminality has proven to be a useful concept to

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<sup>473</sup> Cottrell and Useem, "ATCKs Maintain Global Dimensions Throughout Their Lives."

understand the in-between position of TCKs. While liminality is usually understood in terms of a specific time period, non-place has helped to conceptualize liminality in terms of the in-between place TCKs find themselves in and identify with. As non-place is often not accepted as a valid place to belong to, it pushes TCKs to realize their status as non-person who is neither this nor that. Liquid modernity further highlighted how this in-between state of being comes with its own set of insecurities and uncertainties. However, liminality also comes with the potential for freedom and creativity. Being a liminal liquid person can thus be both a positive as well as negative experience. The distinction between constructive and encapsulated marginality helped draw out suggestions of how to find purpose and meaning as a liminal person occupying non-place. A constructive marginality accepts the tension between liquid identities and solid identities and succeeds in integrating one's identity and showing personal commitment. Identifying as a mediator is one example of such constructive approach to liminality.

The above discussion of conceptual tools to describe the struggles and potential of TCKs should suffice as a solid foundation upon which to build a constructive TCK theology. This theology should act as a 'personal truth' that can help TCKs function as mediators both as a part of the context and apart from the context they are in. Framing the discussion of integrating one's identity and TCKs' personal commitment in the context of Christianity also helps TCKs to find a peer group of mediators they can identify with further encouraging constructive marginality.

**Part Three**  
**A TCK Theology**



## **Chapter 12**

### **Nozomu Miyahira's Theology of 'Between'**

#### **Introduction to Part Three**

Having surveyed the key issues found in the TCK literature in part one (chapters 2 to 6), then identified conceptual tools to focus particularly on the liminal position of TCKs 'in between' as potential mediators in part two (chapters 7 to 11), part three now seeks to construct a theology using these concepts. A TCK theology takes 'liminality' as its central metaphor to contextualize Christianity for TCKs in a way that creates a resonance TCKs can recognize themselves in. The purpose is to present Christianity specifically tailored for TCKs as a 'personal truth' TCKs can commit to within relativism and creating a spiritual locus of integrity that allows for higher order integration of multiple identities.

Chapters twelve and thirteen lay the ground work for a TCK theology: This chapter begins the process of contextualizing theology for TCKs by looking at the case of Nozomu Miyahira's theology for the Japanese context which features 'betweenness' at its core. Miyahira presents an example of the structure of an applied theology that a TCK theology can adopt. Chapter thirteen then answers the question of identity from a theological perspective in dialog with Emil Brunner. Brunner makes the case that believers are 'Mensch-von-Gott-her' whose identities are recreated through participation in the death of Christ. God constitutes the ground of human identity.

Chapters fourteen to eighteen present the core of a TCK theology: first, identifying Thomas Torrance as a suitable theological resource (chapter 14); second, constructing a doctrine of the Trinity using liminality as a core concept (chapters 15 and 16) ; third, constructing a doctrine of Christ as liminal mediator between God and humanity (chapter 17); fourth, bringing these insights together to construct a doctrine of soteriology which highlights believers' newly given identity as liminal figures through justification through Christ (chapter 18).

The overall aim is to make sense of Christianity from the perspective of TCKs by utilizing concepts that TCKs identify with. The third part ultimately argues the case that Christianity can accommodate the interests and concerns TCKs have and that commitment to Christianity as one's personal truth encourages a constructive

marginality allowing TCKs to maintain being both ‘a part of’ and ‘apart from’ various contexts.

### Nozomu Miyahira

Liminality, non-place, liquidity, and mediation are concepts that make sense of TCKs’ experience ‘in between.’ This chapter looks at the Japanese concept of human nature as 人間 (*Ningen*, human being)<sup>474</sup> or ‘human betweenness’ and the unique contextualised theology it gave birth to in the work of the Japanese theologian Nozomu Miyahira (1966- )<sup>475</sup>. Miyahira is a valuable resource to a TCK theology for two reasons: Firstly, he is keenly aware of the need to appropriately contextualize theology and in this regards serves as a strong ally in our attempt to contextualise theology for TCKs. Secondly, while not a TCK himself, having been educated in Japan, the U.S.A., as well as the U.K., Miyahira consciously stands in between different cultural traditions himself.

‘Betweenness’<sup>476</sup> (間 *aida*), while rarely used in the English language, plays a central role in the Japanese context. Culturally speaking, ‘betweenness’ primarily means finding oneself *among* or *amidst* others and defining oneself in constitutive relations to others. William James’ insight that “a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him”<sup>477</sup> serves as a good illustration of what is meant by this ‘human betweenness’. Intimately related to ‘betweenness’ is the pursuit of concord or harmony (和 *wa*) in relation to others.

In comparison, ‘betweenness’ in terms of TCKs’ liminality describes the quality of being on the threshold: *neither* here *nor* there, *neither* belonging to this *nor* to that group; yet somehow finding oneself *both* here *and* there, participating in *both* this *and* that group. This is illustrated by statements such as “at home everywhere and nowhere”<sup>478</sup> as well as “a part of and apart from”<sup>479</sup>. TCKs purposefully use this unique position to their advantage by playing mediatorial

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<sup>474</sup> Japanese characters will be followed by the pronunciation in italics and the English meaning if necessary.

<sup>475</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*. All Japanese names will appear in the Western order of first name, last name instead of the of Japanese reverse order.

<sup>476</sup> ‘Betweenness’ in its technical sense as 間/*aida* will appear in inverted commas.

<sup>477</sup> William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover Publications, 1950), 294.

<sup>478</sup> Useem and Cottrell, "Adult Third Culture Kids," 32-33.

<sup>479</sup> Hill Useem and Downie, "Third-Culture Kids," 22.

roles.<sup>480</sup> While ‘betweenness’ for both TCKs and Japanese society describes how relations to others enter into one’s self understanding and how it creates multiplicity within the self, important differences also need to be acknowledged between the Japanese dual concepts of human ‘betweenness’ (間 *Aida*) and concord (和 *Wa*) with which Miyahira works and TCKs’ experience of liminality and mediation. Culturally speaking, ‘betweenness’ as found in the Japanese society is of limited use to TCKs. However, Miyahira takes ‘betweenness’ beyond its cultural origins to function as a theological resource for his contextualized theology and thereby makes it possible for us to incorporate key ideas into a TCK theology. Theologically speaking, ‘betweenness’ and concord are resources of great utility to the construction of a contextualized theology for TCKs in their liminality and as mediators.

This chapter consists of three parts. First, Miyahira’s work is set in its proper Japanese context. This section explores how ‘betweenness’ has come to shape the meaning of person in Japanese society and how ‘betweenness’ became distorted within Japanese nationalism during WW2 and compares it to TCKs’ liminality.

This discussion, while interesting in and of itself, will set the stage for the second, more relevant, part of exploring how ‘betweenness’ functions theologically. In a one-of-a-kind theology, Miyahira applies ‘betweenness’ as a central theological theme to speak of the Trinity, Christ, and the believer.

Finally, this chapter adapts Miyahira’s insights for the purpose of a TCK theology. ‘Betweenness’ can function as a thread which runs through a specific theological vision tailored towards TCKs. The goal is to appropriate the theological structure Miyahira develops along the lines of ‘betweenness’ and outline a theology fitting for TCKs.

### **The Japanese Context to Miyahira’s Theology of ‘Betweenness’**

When it comes to the Japanese understanding of a person, two concepts stand out: betweenness (間 *Aida*) and concord or harmony (和 *Wa*).<sup>481</sup> The emphasis on ‘betweenness’ and concord has developed naturally in harmony with the way of life and natural environment of the Japanese islands which the Japanese philosopher

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<sup>480</sup> Bochner, *The Mediating Person: Bridges between Cultures*.

<sup>481</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 109-26.

Tetsuro Watsuji calls 風土 (*Fūdo*, Climate).<sup>482</sup> Watsuji's broader concept of *Fūdo* includes both natural conditions and the corresponding cultural constructs. In Japan, cultural constructs such as 'human nature' emerged out of the interplay of the unique Japanese geography, climate, and the way of life, greatly shaped by rice agriculture.

Miyahira argues that the Japanese warm and humid natural conditions as well as the mountainous terrain favoured rice agriculture and a settled life over livestock and a nomadic life.<sup>483</sup> This dependence on rice agriculture conditioned the Japanese community. First, the labour intensive maintenance of rice fields and shared irrigation systems could not be performed by an individual on their own and thus encouraged a "sustained spirit of cooperation and solidarity."<sup>484</sup> A person was powerless without the help from the community which made survival possible. Flowing water, essential for planting rice, could not be owned by an individual but was regulated by the community. Second, the rice agricultural community follows the same regular pattern of planting and harvesting meaning that the same people have to work together again and again. Any discord within the community constituted a threat to survival and thus maintaining concord became vital.

This Japanese *Fūdo* gave rise to the concept that what defines human beings are the social relations between people within the community and concord became the most highly esteemed virtue, even finding itself into the first article of the Seventeen-Article Constitution of 604AD.<sup>485</sup> In order to keep this concord, a person takes on different roles in relation to different people to avoid conflict.<sup>486</sup> The Japanese concept of human being in relation thus differs significantly from the Cartesian self in isolation. 'Human being' or 'humanity' in Japanese is literally spelled 'human-between' (人間 *Ningen*). 人間 (*Ningen* 'human being') employs spatial language to describe how humans find themselves positioned within a

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<sup>482</sup> Tetsuro Watsuji, *Climate and Culture : A Philosophical Study*, trans. Geoffrey Bownas (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1961). Originally published in Japanese as: *Fudo : Ningengakuteki Kosatsu* 風土 人間学的考察 (*Climate : An Anthropological Discussion*) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, 1935). See also: Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 109-13.

<sup>483</sup> *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 111-13, 24.

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>486</sup> This is similar to the different 'I-positions' the self takes in Hubert J. M. Hermans' 'dialogical self theory'. See: Hubert J.M. Hermans, "The Dialogical Self: Toward a Theory of Personal and Cultural Positioning," *Culture & Psychology* 7, no. 3 (2001).

community in a web of relations to others: human ‘betweenness’ signifies this relational humanity.

Three Japanese thinkers help explore the meaning of human ‘betweenness’ in the Japanese context:<sup>487</sup> First, the aforementioned philosopher Tetsuro Watsuji (1889-1960)<sup>488</sup>; second, the psychiatrist Bin Kimura (1931- )<sup>489</sup>; third, the sociologist Eshun Hamaguchi (1931-2008)<sup>490</sup>.

For Watsuji, human nature is essentially communal. Betweenness (間 *Aida*) expresses the inherently relational dimension of human nature. Watsuji suggests that *Ningen* (人間), originally meaning the ‘world of humanity’ as opposed to the ‘underworld’ or the ‘world of beasts’ among other worlds, came to supplement *Hito* (人), meaning person or human, to denote ‘human being’.<sup>491</sup> The equation of the human person with the human world reflected the close association in the Japanese mind of the individual with the community. *Hito* can mean self, other, or society in general and is thus much broader in meaning than ‘individual’. This relational and communal definition of humanity leads Watsuji to interpret *Ningen* (人間) as *Hito no Aida* (人の間) literally meaning ‘human betweenness’ or ‘in between humans.’ Thus, human beings cannot be understood apart from the position they occupy among or ‘between’ others of their community.

The psychiatrist Kimura elaborates on what exactly this ‘between’ is. For Kimura, ‘betweenness’ is a category which precedes the self and the other. Kimura argues that there exists something prior to the individual, a primordial field he calls ‘between man and man’ where relations between the self and the other come into

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<sup>487</sup> I am heavily indebted to Miyahira for these three thinkers. I am roughly following Miyahira’s outline found in: Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 113-19.

<sup>488</sup> Tetsuro Watsuji, *Ningen No Gaku Toshiteno Rinrigaku 人間の学としての倫理学 (Ethics as the Study of Man)* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, 1934).

<sup>489</sup> Bin Kimura, *Hito to Hito No Aida 人と人の間 (Between Man and Man)* (Tokyo: Kobundo Sensho 弘文堂選書, 1972).

<sup>490</sup> Eshun Hamaguchi, *'Nihon-Rashisa' No Saihakken 「日本らしさ」の再発見 (The Rediscovery of 'Japaneseness')* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1988). *Kanjinshugi No Shakai Nihon 間人主義の社会 日本 (Japan a Contextualistic Society)* (Tokyo: Toyo Keizai Shinposha 東洋経済新報社, 1982).

<sup>491</sup> Watsuji, *Ningen No Gaku Toshiteno Rinrigaku 人間の学としての倫理学 (Ethics as the Study of Man)*, 14-19. See also: Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 113-15.

existence.<sup>492</sup> The person is always already in this interpersonal space ‘in between’ and cannot be understood apart from it. The dynamics of this relational ‘betweenness’ (typically understood in terms of the five Confucian relationships of superior-subordinate, parent-child, husband-wife, older sibling-younger sibling, friend-friend<sup>493</sup>) determine the appropriate actions of each counterpart. Miyahira gives the example of ‘betweenness’ among parents and children where children define ‘parenthood’ as much as parents define ‘childhood’. The existence of both parent and child depends on the field of ‘betweenness’ that gives rise to their particular relationship.<sup>494</sup> For Kimura, not the isolated individual, not even the encounter with the other, but the field of ‘betweenness’ constitutes the ground of human nature and the ground of ‘self’.<sup>495</sup>

The concept of ‘self’ (自分 *Jibun*), literally meaning ‘self-portion’, illustrates that who oneself is depends on one’s participation in the ‘betweenness’ with others; the self is the portion of the communal ‘betweenness’ that concerns oneself in the specific relation to the other.<sup>496</sup> Since the relationships a person finds themselves in are multiple, there is not one definite self that transcends all social transactions but a multitude of different ‘I-in-relation-to-you’s bound to each context.<sup>497</sup> The self (自分 *Jibun*) is never fixed but is fluid and changes shape depending on the particular situational dynamics experienced in the field of ‘betweenness’.

Finally, the sociologist Hamaguchi sought to identify the worldview behind this Japanese relational thinking. He coined the word ‘the contextual’ (間人 *Kanjin*) and ‘contextualism’ (間人主義 *Kanjinshugi*), an inversion of the two characters of

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<sup>492</sup> Kimura, *Hito to Hito No Aida* 人と人の間 (*Between Man and Man*), 15f., 65. See also: Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 115-17. Kimura is influenced by Martin Buber’s personalism. Buber also speaks of a ‘realm of between’ where persons meet. See for example: Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (London: Collins, 1961), 240-44.

<sup>493</sup> For a summary of how Confucianism influences Japanese relationships in contrast to Western relationships see: June Ock Yum, "The Impact of Confucianism on Interpersonal Relationships and Communication Patterns in East Asia," *Communication Monographs* 55, no. 4 (1988).

<sup>494</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 116.

<sup>495</sup> Kimura, *Hito to Hito No Aida* 人と人の間 (*Between Man and Man*), 75.

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>497</sup> Miyahira illustrates this by listing the various ways one can refer to oneself in Japanese: *watakushi* (私), *watashi* (私), *atashi* (私), *boku* (僕), *ore* (俺), *onore* (己), *washi* (私), *ware* (我) etc., all designating a different relation to one’s counterpart. Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 117.

*nin*gen (人間 Human).<sup>498</sup> Hamaguchi contrasts Japanese contextualistic behaviour with that of individualistic behaviour.<sup>499</sup> He argues that, while individuals shaped by Western individualism behave according to personal convictions and socially accepted norms, Japanese contextual persons tend to try to conform to particular situations.<sup>500</sup> Rather than universal values, the immediate context dictates behaviour. Thus, Miyahira can say that for the Japanese person “to feel alienated from the context in which they are situated would be almost tantamount to denial of their existence.”<sup>501</sup> Hamaguchi argues that being in relation and in harmony with one’s context constitutes true human existence. This would entail that discord in the social context does not only make the person feel uncomfortable but undoes the person’s very humanity. Whereas Western concepts of the individual (what Hamaguchi calls 個人 *Kojin*) celebrate autonomy and freedom and sharply distinguish between the individual and society, the Japanese contextual person (間人 *Kanjin*) refers to the person in relation to others and in synch with the particular situation.<sup>502</sup>

Being in synch, in harmony, with one’s surroundings constitutes ‘concord’, the second central aspect to human nature.<sup>503</sup> Concord (和 *Wa*) features very dominantly in Japanese thought as a result of the efforts to maintain a harmonious environment to the extent that Japanese things are often designated by the character for concord: ‘和’.<sup>504</sup> Navigating the field of ‘betweenness’ in pursuit of concord became the mark of humanity. Hamaguchi gives three aspects of concord based on contextualism

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<sup>498</sup> Hamaguchi, *Kanjinshugi No Shakai Nihon 間人主義の社会 日本 (Japan a Contextualistic Society)*.

<sup>499</sup> *'Nihon-Rashisa' No Saihakken 「日本らしさ」の再発見 (The Rediscovery of 'Japaneseness')*, 14ff. See also: Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 117-19.

<sup>500</sup> The contrasts drawn here between Western (or North American) individualism and Japanese contextualism or collectivism is not without problems. Collectivism or contextualism turns out to be more universal than Hamaguchi’s arguments would lead to believe. See: Yohtaro Takano and Shunya Sogon, "Are Japanese More Collectivistic Than Americans? Examining Conformity in in-Groups and the Reference-Group Effect," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 39, no. 3 (2008).

<sup>501</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 118.

<sup>502</sup> Hamaguchi, *'Nihon-Rashisa' No Saihakken 「日本らしさ」の再発見 (The Rediscovery of 'Japaneseness')*, 67.

<sup>503</sup> For a detailed analysis of the role concord plays in Japan see: Yutaka Sakisaka, *Wa No Kozo : Girisha Shiso to No Hikaku Ni Oite 和の構造: キリシヤ思想との比較において (The Structure of Concord : Comparison with Greek Thought)* (Tokyo: Hokuju Shuppan 北樹出版, 1979).

<sup>504</sup> For example: 和食 *Washoku*—Japanese food; 和風 *Wafu*—Japanese style; 和紙 *Washi*—Japanese traditional paper; 和製 *Wasei*—Made in Japan.

which he contrasts with Western individualism.<sup>505</sup> First, individualism values self-centredness; contextualism mutual dependence and reciprocity. Second, individualism esteems self-reliance; contextualism mutual reliance and trust in others. Third, individualism encourages self-interest and relations as a means; contextualism relations as an end.<sup>506</sup> ‘Concord’ seeks to define what it means to be human in relation to others and in harmony with the situation.

In summary, the spatial concept of ‘between’, the metaphorical field between person and person where constitutive relations are formed and where ‘self’-defining, concrete situations arise, plays a central role in Japanese thought as can be witnessed in the use of ‘between’ (間 *aida*) in the words for human being (人間 *ningen*) and in Hamaguchi’s contextualism (間人主義 *kanjinshugi*). ‘Betweenness’ can be found on both *social* as well as *personal* levels. Socially, ‘betweenness’ exists between people in a community. People find themselves positioning and repositioning themselves to navigate the different relational dynamics in the ‘field of betweenness’ of their community. Personally, ‘betweenness’ also exists within the multi-voiced person who switches back and forth between different selves within.<sup>507</sup>

### Japanese ‘Betweenness’ and its Limits

This alternative perspective on human nature, emphasising how humans are embedded in their interpersonal and communal relationships, constitutes a powerful critique of the abstracted and isolated individual so far removed from how people actually experience themselves. However, uncritical appreciation of the Japanese concepts of ‘betweenness’ and concord would be foolish given the inhumane suffering Japan unleashed upon her surrounding neighbours during the Second World War. No discussion of ‘betweenness’ and concord can skip over its connection to Japanese nationalism. What has gone wrong among a people so keen

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<sup>505</sup> Hamaguchi uses Steven Lukes as his sparring partner. See: Steven Lukes, *Individualism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973); Hamaguchi, *'Nihon-Rashisa' No Saihakken* 「日本らしさ」の再発見 (*The Rediscovery of 'Japaneseness'*), 95ff.

<sup>506</sup> See also: Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 123.

<sup>507</sup> For multi-voiced selves in a Western context see: Hermans, "The Dialogical Self: Toward a Theory of Personal and Cultural Positioning."; "Mixing and Moving Cultures Require a Dialogical Self," *Human Development* 44, no. 1 (2001). To see how Hermans’ Dialogical Self Theory can be relevant for the study of TCKs’ identity construction, see for example: König, "Moving Experience: Dialogues between Personal Cultural Positions."



on maintaining harmony? Miyahira makes two criticisms of ‘betweenness’ and ‘concord’ in the light of Japan’s Second World War aggressions.<sup>508</sup>

First, attempts to create a unified nationalistic mindset led to the construction of an unquestionable all-encompassing concord which trumped individual freedom. ‘Betweenness’ as a field in which the self and others exist should have functioned as a differentiating concept, a principle of uniqueness. However, in the name of national unity, individuality dissolved into the collective totality. Rather than human beings defining themselves between person and persons within the community, ‘betweenness’ shifted to mean the relation between the person and the state. Concord took on a new meaning, that of enforced uniformity rather than harmony among diversity. Valuing concord above all else meant the silencing of any criticism that would have caused discord and thus the suppression of the individuality. When the relation to one’s community (in this case one’s nation) constitutes one’s very being, then doubting or criticising one’s nation effectively leads to self-destruction. Thus atrocities were committed in the name of the whole in order to protect the concord of the whole. Miyahira comments that “only the whole persisted with no distinct personal responsibility for the war.”<sup>509</sup> The fluid persons quickly dissolved into a faceless mass (mis)guided by an imaginative nationalistic concord.

Furthermore, it has to be said that Japan sought to forcefully impose its vision of total concord not only on its citizens but on her neighbours, thereby violating the individuality of other nations as well. Too much emphasis on creating an all-encompassing harmony can only come about by eliminating any kind of friction-causing criticism, warranted or not. Concord was effectively high-jacked by nationalism without the means to criticise it. Here, ‘betweenness’ and its emphasis on the central role of community aided the development of Japanese ethnocentrism. Interestingly, Watsuji supported Japanese nationalism.<sup>510</sup>

Second, Miyahira argues that betweenness and concord traditionally only apply to the in-group. Miyahira writes that “concord (...) tends traditionally to be closed to those outside it” and “mutuality and relationality as ends in themselves often do not go beyond [one’s own] community.”<sup>511</sup> The relative lack of ethnic and

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<sup>508</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 124-26. See also: *ibid.*, 201-02.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

cultural diversity in Japan ultimately lead to an ethnocentrism which only saw members of one's own national ethnic group as valid human beings to be allowed a place in the metaphorical interpersonal space 'between'. Others beyond the nation were not allowed to enter into relationship and no 'betweenness' was recognized between the people of Japan and the people of her surrounding nations.

### **'Uchi' and 'Soto'**

One shortcoming in Miyahira's work is that he keeps his criticism of Japanese ethnocentrism during the Second World War rather brief. If 'betweenness', even as a theological concept, is to play any role in a theology for TCKs this blind spot must be more thoroughly examined. Identifying the function of 'betweenness' in the emergence of Japanese imperialism will also help us distinguish it from 'betweenness' in the context of TCKs and will aid us in applying theological 'betweenness' more consciously and responsibly to a TCK theology.

Miyahira's discussion of how Japanese 'betweenness' and contextualism (間人主義 *Kanjinshugi*) led to such blatant imperialism could have benefitted greatly from a more thorough investigation of how the strong emphasis on community as seen in 'betweenness' and concord goes hand in hand with the Japanese dual concept of *Uchi* (内 inner) and *Soto* (外 outer). The expert work of the Japanese psychoanalyst Takeo Doi (1920-2009)<sup>512</sup> will provide a much needed supplement to Miyahira's shortcomings.

Doi argues that the dynamics of in-group (内 *uchi*) and out-group (外 *soto*)<sup>513</sup> dominate Japanese social life.<sup>514</sup> *Uchi* and *Soto* do not simply refer to the Western distinction between 'private' and 'public' but also to one's inner circle (the community, in-group, one identifies with and which constitutes one's social identity) and one's outer circle, out-groups with which one does not primarily identify with.

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<sup>512</sup> Two works by Doi are especially of importance: Takeo Doi, *The Anatomy of Dependence* (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1973). *The Anatomy of Self: The Individual Versus Society* (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1986). These two were originally published in Japanese as: '*Amae*' No Kozo 「甘え」の構造 (*The Structure of Amae*) (Tokyo: Kobundo 弘文堂, 1971). *Omote to Ura* 表と裏 (*Omote and Ura*) (Tokyo: Kobundo 弘文堂, 1985).

<sup>513</sup> For social identity and in-group / out-group conflict, see the classic example: Henri Tajfel and John Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel (Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole Pub. Co., 1979).

<sup>514</sup> Doi, *The Anatomy of Dependence*, 40-44.

Importantly, however, *Uchi* and *Soto* are relative as one person might belong to different in-groups (e.g. family, company, sports team, neighbourhood, region, nation all could function as an in-group in some regard) and what one person might assume to be an out-group could by another member be experienced as an in-group.<sup>515</sup> When dealing with one's inner circle (内 *Uchi*) the person shows her *Honne* (本音, 'heart' or true intentions) but when faced with the outer circle (外 *Soto*) the *Honne* is concealed and instead expressed through *Tatemaie* (建前 'face' or outward expression).<sup>516</sup> In a social world where there are multiple 'I-in-relation-to you's leading to obvious inconsistencies in the person, the skilful use of the duality of *Uchi/Honne* and *Soto/Tatemaie* lets that person maintain harmony even among multiple differing constitutive relations. A view expressed within the context of one relation (*Uchi/Honne*) might change drastically when in another context (*Soto/Tatemaie*) without seeming contradictory to the person expressing both views.<sup>517</sup>

Referring to the famous quote by the American psychologist William James "a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him (...) he has as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares"<sup>518</sup>, Doi argues that, while this division of the person into different selves might function harmoniously, external conflict can also be internalized and lead to a split person. This tension can be eased through strong identification with an in-group.<sup>519</sup> Thus 'betweenness' leads people to "divide their lives into inner and outer sectors each with its own, different, standards of behaviour, no one feeling the slightest oddity in this discrepancy."<sup>520</sup> Loyalty to in-groups, even when experiencing contradiction, are thus key to the Japanese concept the human person. To be means to belong to an in-group, a community of 'betweenness'.

'Betweenness' suggests that there is an underlying conflict within the person who is constituted by these various relations to others. Through *Honne/Tatemaie* and

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<sup>515</sup> *The Anatomy of Self: The Individual Versus Society*, 29.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, 35 - 47.

<sup>517</sup> Doi compares this *Honne/Tatemaie*-duality to George Orwell's *Doublethink*. *Ibid.*, 101-02. George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1984), 35.

<sup>518</sup> Quoted in Doi, *The Anatomy of Self: The Individual Versus Society*, 88. Originally found in: James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 1, 294.

<sup>519</sup> Doi, *The Anatomy of Self: The Individual Versus Society*, 90.

<sup>520</sup> *The Anatomy of Dependence*, 42-43.

correspondingly *Uchi/Soto* these tensions are managed to maintain concord. In a sense, the concord even within the group is created outwardly (*Soto*) through the careful concealing (*Tatemae*) of the inner contradictions (*Uchi/Honne*). Criticism or disagreement is kept ‘within’ (*Uchi/Honne*) oneself while outwardly a consensus is maintained within the group (*Soto/Tatemae*). This obviously works much more smoothly within a homogenous in-group.

‘Betweenness’ also suggest how important the community is and thus how the in-group to which one is bound encompasses the individual. Doi therefore notes that “[i]t is extremely difficult for a Japanese to transcend the group and act independently. The reason would seem to be that a Japanese feels vaguely that it is treacherous to act on his own without considering the group to which he belongs, and feels shamed, even, at doing something on his own.”<sup>521</sup> The weakness of the Japanese concept of ‘betweenness’ and ‘concord’ during the rise of imperialism in Japan must be viewed within the context of the *Uchi/Soto* and *Honne/Tatemae* dualities without which such nationwide in-group could not have been formed and maintained. The pursuit of concord drove the Japanese to an all-encompassing national in-group and, while differences within were negotiated through the *Honne/Tatemae* distinction, the emphasis on ‘betweenness’ among one’s in-group resulted in the construction of an ultimate *Uchi/Soto* distinction between the Japanese people (in-group) and her surrounding Asian neighbours (out-group). Contradictions could not be pointed out as the immediate context could not be transcended and viewed objectively. It is in the light of this that Miyahira argues that the open-mindedness and efforts to establish common ground cease with the boundaries of the in-group and are refused to the out-group.<sup>522</sup> Doi’s important insights on the Japanese psyche thus shed light on how *Ningen* (人間) encouraged the nationalistic society in the case of Japan and supplements Miyahira’s rather brief criticism.

### **Japanese and TCK ‘Betweenness’**

Examining the role of ‘betweenness’ within Japanese imperialism serves to further contrast Japanese ‘betweenness’ in its cultural context with the ‘betweenness’ of

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<sup>521</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>522</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 126.

TCKs in their liminality. ‘Betweenness’ (間 *aida*) roughly corresponds to TCKs’ liminality and concord (和 *wa*) to mediation, two concepts we have identified as central to TCKs. However, ‘betweenness’ in the Japanese context and ‘betweenness’ for TCKs lead to very different outcomes. Whereas in the Japanese situation, ‘betweenness’ resulted in the dissolution of the individual in the collective and the exclusion of out-groups, in the case of TCKs, often times the opposite is the result: worldliness, tolerance, but also confused loyalties.<sup>523</sup> While ‘betweenness’ in the Japanese context failed to allow Japanese people to transcend their immediate situation, ‘betweenness’ for TCKs allows TCKs to gain an outsider’s perspective. The danger in the case of TCKs’ ‘betweenness’ seems to lie in a cold disassociation (encapsulated marginality) from all groups rather than a blind commitment to one group.<sup>524</sup>

The difference lies in the scale of ‘betweenness’. Whereas Japanese ‘betweenness’ takes place within a largely homogenous intra-cultural context, TCK ‘betweenness’ is the result of clashing cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and geographical realities. Compared to TCKs’ global ‘betweenness’, Japanese ‘betweenness’ remains fairly local. ‘Betweenness’ in Japan remains within what Marc Augé calls anthropological place; ‘betweenness’ for TCKs takes place between anthropological places, within non-place.<sup>525</sup> ‘Betweenness’ in the Japanese context emphasizes the in-group to which one belongs. ‘Betweenness’ for TCKs is between different in-groups placing the TCK in the category of ‘other’ not really within any group. The emphasis for TCKs is on the underlying humanity common to all while acknowledging the unique cultural traits of various in-groups.<sup>526</sup>

‘Concord’ in Japan can be mistaken for a standard to which to conform in order to create uniformity. It is maintained through the skilful application of *honne* and *tatemae* within anthropological place. In contrast, mediation for TCKs aims to protect local uniqueness from forced assimilation by the dominant party and to facilitate reconciliation and mutual enrichment across differences without threatening the integrity of others.<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>523</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 85-98.

<sup>524</sup> Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training," 115.

<sup>525</sup> Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*.

<sup>526</sup> Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 235-36.

<sup>527</sup> Bochner, *The Mediating Person: Bridges between Cultures*.

The key to redeeming ‘betweenness’ and to averting the dangers of relativizing the self lies in eliminating out-groups. Japanese nationalism was not able to see Japanese identity positioned in the metaphorical space between Japan and her neighbours. Neighbouring countries were not included in constitutive relations and were not thought of as ends in themselves. Japanese ‘betweenness’ during the Second World War succumbed to a pathetic vision of nationalistic uniformity at the exclusion of everyone else. ‘Betweenness’ and ‘concord’ must be radically expanded so as not to create any out-groups. ‘Betweenness’ must include relations to genuine others (foreigners) and ‘concord’ must have a place for justice for the oppressed, even those radically different from oneself.

Japanese ‘betweenness’ itself falls short as a model for TCKs due to its tendency to create strong in-groups and sharply distinguish between in-group members and outsiders. However, Miyahira has taken ‘betweenness’ and ‘concord’ from the Japanese context and utilized it as a theological resource thereby taking it beyond its cultural shortcomings. As Doi has argued, as a cultural concept ‘betweenness’ did not encourage people to transcend their immediate situation and even criticise their context. As a theological concept, however, Miyahira uses ‘betweenness’ and concord in a way that lets people overcome quiet submission to nationalistic, ethnocentric in-groups. Hence, while ‘betweenness’ in the context of Japanese culture serves as the starting point for Miyahira’s contextualized theology and is thus of limited use to a TCK theology, theological ‘betweenness’ can nevertheless serve as a valuable resource. The theological use of ‘betweenness’ and concord will provide us with a structure to build a theology for TCKs which strongly resonates with the concepts of ‘liminality’ and ‘mediation’.

### **Contextualization of Theology**

While there are significant differences that should not be ignored, the terminology of ‘betweenness’ can still be utilised theologically. It is here that Miyahira, who has constructed a ‘theology of concord’<sup>528</sup> for the Japanese context, presents a viable way forward. Miyahira uses ‘betweenness’ and ‘concord’ as key terms to contextualize doctrines such as the Trinity and Christology historically shaped by the

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<sup>528</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*.

categories of ‘ousia’/‘substance’ and ‘hypostasis’/‘person’.<sup>529</sup> Following Miyahira’s example, a similar theological perspective for TCKs can be constructed. Both Miyahira’s ‘theology of concord’ and a TCK theology seek to present a meaningful and accessible version of Christianity for a specific target group who both hold a self-understanding involving ‘betweenness’.

Is Miyahira warranted in using a social concept for a theological purpose? Much of his book is devoted to addressing this very question of the justification of the contextualisation of theology.<sup>530</sup> While making Christian theology more accessible to the Japanese people seems like a noble task, does speaking of God in terms of human identity not reduce theology to anthropology à la Ludwig Feuerbach?<sup>531</sup> Miyahira is convinced that “it is both orthodox and justifiable for those in a Japanese context to employ the Japanese cultural framework in formulating the doctrine [of the Trinity] (...) It is not merely orthodox but also necessary.”<sup>532</sup> Two beliefs underlie the supposition that a contextualised theology is necessary: First, Miyahira believes that all theology must be contextual if it is to have any meaning.<sup>533</sup> Theology has to find a language which resonates with its audience for it to have any kind of impact. In the words of C. S. Lewis: “Our business is to present that which is timeless (...) in the particular language of our own age. (...) We must learn the language of our audience.”<sup>534</sup> To do theology meaningfully requires the use of meaningful terminology embedded in the experience of people. A theology with no points of contact to its human recipients, by definition, cannot make any sense.

Second, Miyahira believes that theology can never be final but with every cultural shift has to be redone. In fact, cultural diversity lets us explore the width and

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<sup>529</sup> For the role ‘ousia’/‘substance’ and ‘hypostasis’/‘person’ played in the development of the doctrine of the patristic doctrine of Trinity see: J. Warren Smith, “The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>530</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 9-105. Miyahira looks at the cases of Tertullian, Augustine, and Karl Barth to demonstrate how each have constructed doctrines of the Trinity using the resources of their context.

<sup>531</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (New York: Harper, 1957).

<sup>532</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 4. Miyahira relies here on: John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: C. Scribner, 1966).

<sup>533</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 4-5.

<sup>534</sup> C. S. Lewis, “Christian Apologetics,” in *God in the Dock : Essays on Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 96.

depth of the meaning of theology.<sup>535</sup> Each cultural context contributes something unique to the theological discussion and serves to highlight a unique aspect. Contextualizing can only lead to a fuller understanding of God's revelation. While all contextual theological perspectives inevitably fall short of the final beatific vision, it is always better to have an additional set of eyes, be they Japanese or belonging to a TCK, to supplement the communal theological outlook.

Therefore, 'betweenness' is a valid construct through which to look at Christianity if it helps to make sense of theological doctrines for a specific audience. According to Miyahira, the "divine receptor-oriented approach,"<sup>536</sup> displayed in the incarnation of the Word of God and the self-revelation of God, places such human concepts as 'betweenness' within the reach of God's redemption. While the gospel will always remain universal, it needs to be expressed uniquely locally.<sup>537</sup> Miyahira affirms as valid, therefore, the goal of presenting a uniquely particular vision of Christianity using the language and concepts found in the context of TCKs that makes sense of Christianity to TCKs. TCKs and their experience are a legitimate theological resource and tapping into this rich resource in no way threatens theology but adds to the increasingly rich understanding of God's revelation.

### **'Betweenness' as a Theological Resource**

The foundation of Miyahira's theological vision is St. Athanasius' account of the incarnation: the scope of Christ's redemption is universal and permeates all of creation.<sup>538</sup> It follows then that those within the Japanese natural and cultural context (風土 *Fūdo*) must be included within the scope of God's redemption as well. It is valid to ask what it means for the Japanese people that the Word became flesh and dwelt among them. Interestingly, the Japanese translation of John 1:14 uses precisely the expression 'between us' (間 *Aida*) to speak of the Son becoming truly human, a human being among/in between other human beings.<sup>539</sup> For Miyahira, it makes sense

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<sup>535</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 5.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*, 143. Miyahira relies on the following contextualised theology to make the point of the universality and particularity of theology: Takenaka, *God Is Rice : Asian Culture and Christian Faith*.

<sup>538</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 141-42.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.



then to employ the language of ‘between’ to speak of the Son taking on authentic human existence and establishing true concord between God and humanity.

But does it make sense to use ‘betweenness’ and concord to speak of God beyond the incarnation? Miyahira thinks so. He confesses that “[t]here is hardly, as far as I know, any Christian theologian who has ever attempted to explain the triune God in detail in terms of (...) betweenness”<sup>540</sup>, however, there is a rich tradition of employing ‘relations of origin’ to distinguish the persons of the Trinity. Miyahira sees a connection that links the Japanese understanding of ‘human betweenness’, i.e. constitutive relations to others, and divine persons being distinguished, and thus constituted, solely by their relations to each other.

Miyahira uses Gregory of Nazianzen who employed ‘relation’ to distinguish the three persons and specifically mentions ‘betweenness’ to speak of the Holy Spirit.<sup>541</sup> He argues that ‘betweenness’ can also be applied to speak of the Father and the Son. Miyahira suggests that ‘betweenness’ is shared by all three persons equally within God and hence three sets of statements concerning the Father, Son, and Spirit follow:

[I]f the betweenness is shared by the three, [1] we should also have the betweenness which the Father and the Holy Spirit share and that which the Son and the Holy Spirit share as well as that which the Father and the Son share. [2] We may also say not merely that the Holy Spirit is between the Father and the Son, but also that the Father is between the Son and the Holy Spirit; the Son is between the Father and the Holy Spirit. (...) [3] [T]he Father exists ‘between’ the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Son ‘between’ the Father and the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit ‘between’ the Father and the Son.<sup>542</sup>

Miyahira goes on to clarify these three sets of statements. ‘Betweenness’ has a differentiating function as well as a linking function. The Holy Spirit between the Father and the Son is active as the giver of life in the generation of the Son; the Son between the Father and the Spirit is active as the one sending the Holy Spirit from the Father; and the Father between the Son and the Spirit is active as the one who begets and from whom the Spirit proceeds. Just as relations of origin distinguish the

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<sup>540</sup> Ibid.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid., 143-51. See: Gregory of Nazianzen, *Oration XXXI*, 8. “(...) inasmuch He is between the Unbegotten and the Begotten is God.” Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzen*, vol. 7, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1894), 320.

<sup>542</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 150. Numbers inserted.

persons, so each unique ‘betweenness’ distinguishes the two other persons and constitutes that person as distinguishing agent.<sup>543</sup>

The key points Miyahira seeks to make are that, first, as in the case of human ‘betweenness’ (relations), divine ‘betweenness’ (relations of origin) is intrinsic to the divine persons and, second, that ‘betweenness’ “is the differentiating factor in the triune God”<sup>544</sup> as it is in human beings within the community. Since there is ‘human betweenness’ (人間 *Ningen*) in the Japanese context it makes sense to speak of ‘divine betweenness.’ Miyahira here coins a new Japanese word: 神間 (*Shinkan* ‘Divine-Between’). From this point of view, the ‘betweenness’ which the Son assumed in the incarnation is not a coincidence but, much more significantly, a reflection of the divine ‘betweenness’ that God eternally and inherently is.<sup>545</sup>

Supplementing the concept of three ‘betweennesses’ is that of one ‘divine concord’. For Miyahira divine concord means unity in judgment and in love.<sup>546</sup> This concord, however, is not a moral unity but results from the ontological unity of the one Godhead of the Father.<sup>547</sup> Just as there is divine triune ‘betweenness’ revealed in the incarnation of the Son among (i.e. between) humans which resonates with human ‘betweenness’ within community, so divine concord also finds its expression in the concord between the two natures in the incarnate Christ and is reflected in human concord among believers.<sup>548</sup> Miyahira coins another new Japanese word for ‘divine concord’ to accompany ‘divine betweenness’: 神和 *Shinwa* (Divine-Concord).

Thus, Miyahira proposes a new set of terms to make sense of the Trinity within the Japanese context and furthermore outlines a theology with ‘betweenness’ and concord at its core. The triune God is the “God of three betweennesses in one concord, or ‘*sankan ichiwa no kami* 三間一和の神’.”<sup>549</sup> Divine concord is between the three divine persons. Similarly, there is concord between God and humanity in Christ, and, finally, there is concord between people, i.e. the redeemed concord of ‘human betweenness’.<sup>550</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid., 154-56. Miyahira relies here on the work of Novatian.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid., 153-55.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid., 159.

Once Miyahira has established this basic pattern, he begins to flesh out his theological vision.<sup>551</sup> On the one hand, ‘betweenness’ designates differences and diversity. It distinguishes between the begetter (Father) and the begotten (Son), the begotten (Son) and the proceeding (Spirit), and the breather(s) (Father or Father and Son) and the proceeding (Spirit). Each ‘betweenness’ gives each person their identity in relation to the others. On the other hand, concord between the divine persons consists of (1) intimate knowing, (2) entrusting, and (3) glorifying. All three are based on the free love that God is. The Father knows the Son completely and vice versa. The Spirit also fully participates in the perfect knowledge the Son has of the Father and vice versa.<sup>552</sup> The Father entrusts his work to the Son and the Son in turn entrusts all things to the Father in his self-offering. The Spirit also participates in the entrusting by continuing the work of the Son and entrusting everything back to the Father.<sup>553</sup> Finally, the Son glorifies the Father and the Father glorifies the Son in return by revealing himself and raising the Son. The Spirit also participates in the glorifying relationship with the Father and Son.<sup>554</sup> Thus there is perfect concord between the three persons of the Trinity in knowledge, in trust, and in glory.

### **Three areas of ‘Betweenness’ and Concord**

Miyahira applies ‘betweenness’ and concord within his unique theological structure in three key theological areas: first, the Trinity; second, the person of Christ; third, believers.

First, there is ‘betweenness’ and concord as described above: within the triune God. ‘Betweenness’ designates difference in relation, constituting each unique person. Concord describes the perfect unity in knowledge, trust, and glorification.<sup>555</sup> Second, ‘betweenness’ and concord exist between God and humanity.<sup>556</sup> Divine concord overflows to reach humanity in creation. The concord found between God and humanity is the very same concord within the triune God. However, Miyahira inverts the meaning of ‘betweenness’ between God and humanity: Human sinfulness has entered the relation between God and humanity to cause a threefold rift.

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<sup>551</sup> Ibid., 176-221.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid., 178-79, 84.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid., 179-80, 84.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid., 180-81, 84-85.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid., 177-90.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid., 190-99.

‘Betweenness’ stands opposed to concord on this level. Sinful ‘betweenness’ has three characteristics. First, it signifies human ignorance of God. Second, ‘betweenness’ means disbelief and unacceptance. Finally, ‘betweenness’ shows itself in human dishonour of God.<sup>557</sup> Human ignorance, disbelief, and dishonour are diametrically opposed to the divine concord of knowing, trusting, and glorifying. Thus, ‘betweenness’ and concord work against each other in the relation between God and creation.

Concord between God and humanity is restored through the Son. The incarnate Son reveals the Father and the concord of knowledge is realized between God and humanity. Knowledge of God through the Son leads to believing in the concord of trust between the Son, the Father, and the Spirit. This leads to glorification of God through the Son by humanity. In return, God honours believers as God’s children. In short then, concord between the believer and God is established through participating in God’s concord. Concord with God is mutual but initiated by God alone. Knowing and trusting God leads to humans glorifying God and God honouring humanity in turn.<sup>558</sup> Divine concord thus undoes the rift of sinful ‘betweenness’ between God and creation.

This results in ‘betweenness’ and concord in the third theological area, namely that between people.<sup>559</sup> Here Miyahira sees an opportunity to critique Japanese ‘betweenness’ and concord in order to redeem it through the model of divine ‘betweenness’ and concord and takes them beyond their Japanese immediate context. Whereas Japanese nationalism exploited ‘betweenness’ by prioritizing a superficial uniformity (concord) over against individuality (‘betweenness’), divine concord and ‘betweenness’ are in perfect balance allowing for both unity and diversity. The individual is not dissolved into the collective, but God knows every person by their name. Miyahira argues that “the Son resides intimately between individuals, not merely among them.”<sup>560</sup> Divine concord does not violate individuals but affirms them. Dominance of ‘betweenness’ (individuals) over concord (harmony) is also critiqued. Divine concord unites people across differences and reconciles them. There is unity with distinction, individuality with harmony. Worldly concord, as

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<sup>557</sup> Ibid., 190-91.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid., 199-207.

<sup>560</sup> Ibid., 200.

could be seen during Japan's period of imperialism, is coercive, competitive, and, exclusive. In contrast, divine concord based in God's free love is voluntary, mutually serving, and inclusive as demonstrated in Jesus Christ.<sup>561</sup>

### **Towards a TCK Theology of 'Betweenness' as Liminality**

Two conclusions follow from Miyahira's contextualised theology pertaining to a TCK theology. First of all, Miyahira has shown that contextualising theology is a necessary part of any theology. In order to make sense to a particular group of people, in his case Japanese people, theology must make active use of their cultural constructs. This should not be any different in the case of TCKs. If Miyahira can use 'betweenness' and concord in the Japanese context to construct a theology of 'betweenness' and concord, then a similar theology contextualizing liminality and mediation is warranted. Miyahira's contextualized theology is, however, not without its limits. Miyahira criticizes the ethnocentric 'betweenness' and concord in the Japanese and seeks to replace it with a redeemed 'betweenness' and concord based on understanding, trusting, and honouring others. However, it remains limited by the Japanese context. TCK's 'betweenness' as liminality in contrast is much more radical and, as a result, presents a much more global theological vision in comparison to Miyahira. A TCK theology of 'betweenness' is more global in its outlook and concerns itself not only with making sense of Christianity for TCKs but transforming TCKs' marginality into a constructive one.

Second, while Miyahira shows how theology can use 'betweenness' and concord as a resource to formulate a doctrine of the Trinity, he does much more than speak of the Trinity in his work. He sets forth a theological structure that begins with the Trinity of 'three betweennesses in one concord', extends to 'betweenness' which divides God and fallen humanity and is overcome by Christ and ends with a redeemed 'betweenness' and concord between people where individuality (betweenness) and unity (concord) can be found in balance. The dual theme of 'betweenness' and concord permeates his theological structure and is applied in each key theological area. This God-Christ-believer structure is an outline that a TCK theology can emulate.

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<sup>561</sup> Ibid., 206.

One weak point in Miyahira constitutes the inversion of the meaning of ‘betweenness’ for the God-human relationship.<sup>562</sup> While in the Trinity, ‘betweenness’ underlies the distinction of the persons and establishes their distinctiveness in relation to the two others, when Miyahira applies ‘betweenness’ to speak of the relation between God and humanity it comes to mean the sinful distance of fallen humanity from God. Without denying that sinful humanity is estranged from God and thus in need of mediation, can ‘betweenness’ not be a positive quality to describe the relation between creator and creation? ‘Betweenness’ signifies the important difference between the transcendent creator and creaturely humanity and belongs inherently to the relation between Creator and creation. Rather than a gap, ‘betweenness’ can designate the space between God and humanity where the two can meet in an encounter without one being reduced to the other. ‘Betweenness’ here takes on the qualities of Marc Augé’s non-place.<sup>563</sup> ‘Betweenness’, the defining relation that God has to creation, distinguishes as well as relates the two. With creation and the incarnation, creation’s history has become God’s history. And, similarly, ‘betweenness’ from the perspective of creation denotes creation’s dependency on God. Unlike, Miyahira, this understanding of the relation between God and humanity does not see ‘betweenness’ as something to be overcome but something which ought to be appropriately maintained. This, of course, naturally leads to locating ‘betweenness’ in the mediator between God and humanity: the incarnate Son of God. Miyahira only sees the Son of God as betweenness in terms of his existence within the Trinity and in terms of his true humanity among fellow humans, not in terms of the two-natured incarnate mediator. A TCK theology sees the incarnate Son positioned between God and humanity, embodying a constructive marginality.

A second weak point of Miyahira is his reliance on a rather static view of ‘betweenness’ as a position in between rather than a movement and concord as a state of being rather than an activity. ‘Betweenness’ in the Trinity, in Christ, and in believers certainly captures something true and valuable about Christianity. However, liminality, non-place, liquidity carry a much more dynamic connotation which seems more fitting for a dynamic, active God. Similarly, mediation like

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<sup>562</sup> Ibid., 190-93.

<sup>563</sup> Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*.

reconciliation is an ongoing activity rather than an achieved end like concord. A TCK theology of 'betweenness' must emphasize its dynamic nature in order to be much more attractive to TCKs who are used to mobility.

With these two modifications to Miyahira's theology of 'betweenness', a broad theological vision of a TCK theology emerges. The triune God can be described in a threefold mediating liminality, the Father distinguishing and mediating between the Son and the Spirit; the Son distinguishing and mediating between the Father and the Spirit; and the Spirit distinguishing and mediating between the Father and the Son. In each person's case, the person is both 'a part of' the other two as well as 'apart from' the others.

Furthermore, Christ as liminal saviour goes forth from God to act as mediator in between God and humanity. To borrow Karl Barth's words, the Son in typical TCK fashion expatriates "into the far country"<sup>564</sup> and embodies God's mission towards creatures as well as humanity's reconciliation to God.<sup>565</sup> Christ is the archetypal liminal figure, a Third (so to speak) between God (Christ's first 'culture') and humanity (Christ's second 'culture'), and thus, for TCKs, a familiar in-between person who reveals a familiar in-between God.

Finally, what kind of reconciled humanity would such a TCK theology portray? Miyahira argues that redemption leads to a restoration of humans as true 'human-betweenness' whose mission it is to create concord among people, i.e. peace-makers.<sup>566</sup> This makes sense to TCKs who aspire to find their purpose in mediation.<sup>567</sup> Humans are meant to be liminal beings in the image of a liminal God, saved through a liminal saviour. A TCK theology sees humanity being perfected in liminality through mediation.

## Conclusion

Miyahira's theology of 'betweenness' sets an example of how a contextualized theology looks like. It does so, first, by utilizing the language of 'betweenness' as its

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<sup>564</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV/1 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1956), 157-210.

<sup>565</sup> See also: Damon W. K. So, "The Missionary Journey of the Son of God into the Far Country: A Paradigm of the Holistic Gospel Developed from the Theology of Karl Barth," *Transformation* 23, no. 3 (2006).

<sup>566</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 201-07.

<sup>567</sup> See for example the case of TCK Barbara Schaetti: Schaetti, "Phoenix Rising: A Question of Cultural Identity," 185-86.

key feature and, second, but outlining a theological structure starting with the triune God, followed by the incarnate Christ, and ending in the redemption of humanity permeated by 'betweenness' in each key area. Miyahira's approach, with the appropriate changes, can easily be adopted to construct a TCK theology of 'betweenness'.

Two areas, however, remain to be dealt with: First is the question of identity which is a prominent issue for TCKs but not for Miyahira; Second, is the need to give 'betweenness' a more dynamic connotation in its theological context. These two issues will be addressed in the next chapter.



## Chapter 13

### Emil Brunner: ‘*Mensch-Von-Gott-Her*’

#### Introduction

This chapter serves two purposes. First, the all-important question of how to understand identity theologically needs to be answered in order to successfully cater to the needs of TCKs. This chapter compares how identity was constructed during the Third Reich with how the Swiss theologian constructed an alternative account of a Christian identity rooted in an encounter with God. Second, this chapter seeks to supplement Nozomu Miyahira’s theology of ‘betweenness’<sup>568</sup> with a more dynamic account of a God who reaches out toward humanity. Brunner’s description of God as ‘*Gott-zum-Menschen-hin*’ and humanity as ‘*Mensch-von-Gott-her*’ adds a dimension of movement to ‘betweenness’ more appropriate to TCK’s liminality in mobility.

Following Miyahira’s theological structure of Trinity, Christ, and believer, this chapter focuses on three key points in the context of the question of what it means to be human: First, who does God reveal Godself to be in terms of the human question of identity? Second, what did Jesus Christ accomplish? Third, who are human beings in light of these previous two questions?

#### ‘Identity as Encounter’

Emil Brunner (1889-1966) provides a theological answer to the question of TCKs’ identity. Writing extensively during the turbulent interwar period, his theological anthropology deals with the question of who we humans are and who gets to define human existence.<sup>569</sup> This chapter looks at his 1937 Uppsala lectures, published the following year as *Wahrheit als Begegnung*.<sup>570</sup> Of interest is how Brunner constructs human identity through theology in contrast with National Socialism’s construction of German identity along the lines of ‘Blood and Soil’ ideology (*Blut und Boden*). Brunner’s construction of human identity is based on a personal correspondence

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<sup>568</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*.

<sup>569</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Emil Brunner : A Reappraisal* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 133-72.

<sup>570</sup> Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*. First published in English as: *The Divine-Human Encounter* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943). Subsequently republished with a new title as: *Truth as Encounter : A New Ed., Much Enlarged, of "the Divine-Human Encounter"*. For commentary on this book see: McGrath, *Emil Brunner : A Reappraisal*, 154-72. Also: Frank Jehle, *Emil Brunner : Theologe im 20. Jahrhundert* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2006), 323-53.

between God and humanity and participation in Christ's death on the cross.

For Brunner, God is not an abstract 'God-in-Godself' but always a 'God-towards-humanity' (*Gott-zum-Menschen-hin*) and, correspondingly, humans are never 'humans-in-themselves' but always 'humans-from-God' (*Mensch-von-Gott-her*).<sup>571</sup> *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin* signifies that God is a self-revealing and self-mediating God as well as that God is the one who bestows identity on human beings. *Mensch-von-Gott-her* signifies that our human existence relies solely on the gracious and free act of God to create humanity ex nihilo. Humans as *Mensch-von-Gott-her* completely depend on the self-giving *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin*. Knowledge of God is linked through a personal correspondence with knowledge of ourselves and by personally encountering God humans become "truly personal."<sup>572</sup> Thus, when Brunner writes 'truth as encounter', from the perspective of TCKs, it reads as 'identity as encounter'. Brunner supplies an answer to the central question: Who am I?

The significance of Brunner's work on human identity comes to light when set in its proper context of the 1930s developments during the Third Reich. The rise of German National Socialism starting in 1933 was the background against which the Uppsala lectures were delivered. Both National Socialism and Brunner advanced competing claims to human identity. These two contrasting views can be described using Marc Augé's categories of 'anthropological place' and 'non-place'<sup>573</sup>: Germany's National Socialism advocated a definition of human identity from within anthropological place based on the ideology of *Blut und Boden*. Brunner locates human identity in the ultimate theological 'non-place': the place of Christ's death where God meets humanity to restore the lost identity as *Mensch-von-Gott-her*. This chapter will thus first look at Germany's construction of identity in Augé's anthropological place and, second, detail Brunner's construction of Christian identity within the non-place of Christ's death.

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<sup>571</sup> Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, 33. All quotations in this chapter will be English translations from the original German 1938 work.

<sup>572</sup> McGrath, *Emil Brunner: A Reappraisal*, 77. This linking of knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves reflects the typical Reformed idea originally found in John Calvin, *Institutio Religionis Christianae*, 1.i.1: wisdom "consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected together by multiple links, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives rise to the other." See for example: Cornelis P. Venema, "The 'Twofold Knowledge of God' and the Structure of Calvin's Theology," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 4, no. 2 (1988).

<sup>573</sup> Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*.

### **German Anthropological Place: Identity based on ‘Blut und Boden’**

Brunner felt a theological responsibility to engage with the political context of the church and construct a contemporary theology which is capable of critically evaluating ideologies such as Nazism.<sup>574</sup> The rise of National Socialism is very much linked to the question of how Germans sought to reconstruct their identity after the devastating consequences of the Great War.

Several factors contributed to the rise of the Third Reich.<sup>575</sup> The Weimar Republic (1919-1933), set up as a compromise, faced difficulties from the onset. Following the end of the Great War and the collapse of the Kaiserreich, Germany dealt with immense financial difficulties in the 1920s as the result of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles and further suffered from the unsuccessful Beer Hall Putsch (*Hitlerputsch*) in 1923. The slowly regained stability towards the late 20s was undone by the October 1929 stock market crash in the USA which caused banks to call in their loans from Germany. Germany found itself in crisis. This naturally triggered doubts about German identity and the need for some form of reassuring validation through strong identification. By 1932 the republic's supporters had lost a commanding legislative majority and Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) was invited to form a government.<sup>576</sup>

Protestantism in Germany also found itself in a difficult situation following the Great War. The Protestant church had supported the Kaiser's disastrous war policies and had enjoyed a privileged status. During the Weimar Republic years, attitudes toward the Protestant church were critical and Germany saw a rise in secularism. Filling the void were alternative cultural and religious movements (*völkisch-religiöse Bewegungen*).<sup>577</sup> One of these was the German Faith Movement (*Deutsche Glaubensbewegung*) founded by Jakob Wilhelm Hauer (1881-1962) based on

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<sup>574</sup> McGrath, *Emil Brunner : A Reappraisal*, 66-70.

<sup>575</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (London: Penguin, 2005), 77-307.

<sup>576</sup> For a concise account of the failure of Germany's first parliamentary democracy and subsequent takeover by the NSDAP see: Karl Dietrich Bracher, "Stages of Totalitarian "Integration" (*Gleichschaltung*): The Consolidation of National Socialist Rule in 1933 and 1934," in *From Republic to Reich : The Making of the Nazi Revolution : Ten Essays*, ed. Hajo Holborn (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972). This essay was originally published in 1956 in German: "Stufen totalitärer Gleichschaltung: Die Befestigung der nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft 1933/34," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 4, no. 1 (1956).

<sup>577</sup> Uwe Puschner and Clemens Vollnhals, eds., *Die völkisch-religiöse Bewegung im Nationalsozialismus : Eine Beziehungs- und Konfliktgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012).

Hinduism and German ethnocentrism.<sup>578</sup> This movement propagated the *Blut und Boden* ideology and sought to construct a German identity around the idea of race (German blood) and connection to homeland (soil) as well as the cult of Hitler's personality. *Blut und Boden* idealized rural life in the country side (Augé's anthropological place) and opposed urban culture (Augé's non-place). Through the spread of the neopagan *völkischen* ideologies, German ethnocentrism, Aryan racialism, and National Socialism gained traction and became key markers of German identity.

Employing Augé's categories, German National Socialist identity was firmly rooted in Germany's constructed anthropological place. The common characteristics of anthropological place are history, relations, and identity.<sup>579</sup> *Völkische* ideologies constructed a history of 'Germanness' to give German people the sense of permanence and stability through a connection to its supposed origins. 'German blood' created a natural and unquestionable connection (relation) among all 'true' Germans. And finally, National Socialism constituted the umbrella identity under which everything was unified (*Gleichschaltung*). History, relations, and identity had to be guarded against their enemies through clearly marked lines of racial, ideological, geographical demarcation. Resembling the simplistic cultural model by Johann Gottfried Herder<sup>580</sup>, one German race, internally homogenous and opposed against all external 'others', protected German soil which was elevated to a quasi-holy place. The *Blut und Boden* ideology is an extreme form of the construction of identity within anthropological place.

### **German Religious Identity: Faith eclipsed by Anthropological Place**

How did Christianity respond to this construction of German identity? The following slogan found on a signboard in Lippe, Westphalia, in 1935 illustrates well how powerful the constructed German identity was: "*Die Taufe mag ganz nützlich sein,*

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<sup>578</sup> Horst Junginger, "Die Deutsche Glaubensbewegung als ideologisches Zentrum der völkisch-religiösen Bewegung," in *Die völkisch-religiöse Bewegung im Nationalsozialismus : Eine Beziehungs- und Konfliktgeschichte*, ed. Uwe Puschner and Clemens Vollnhals (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 65-101. See also: Ulrich Nanko, *Die Deutsche Glaubensbewegung : Eine historische und soziologische Untersuchung* (Marburg: Diagonal-Verlag, 1993).

<sup>579</sup> Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, 52-56.

<sup>580</sup> For a summary and criticism of the Herderian conception of culture see: Welsch, "Transculturality - the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today."

*Doch glattet sie kein Nasenbein*”<sup>581</sup> (Though baptism might be useful, it won’t straighten a crooked nose). When pitched against German *Blut und Boden*-identity and its clear line of demarcation between races, Christian faith and its belief in equality before God did not stand a chance. In a sense true German salvation was found only in the German race and homeland. Christian faith was viewed with suspicion.

In response, German Protestantism aligned itself with the increasing emphasis on *völkische* identity and responded in 1932 with a Christian version of the German Faith Movement called the ‘Faith Movement of German Christians’ (*Glaubensbewegung Deutsche Christen*), better known as ‘German Christians’ (*Deutsche Christen*).<sup>582</sup> Following the *Blut und Boden* ideology, German Christians sought to create a Christian identity along racial lines with strong anti-Semitic tendencies. The goal was to create a spiritual home for Aryans of the Third Reich. Racial categories were thought of as divinely ordained and thus German Christians saw their cause as divinely sanctioned.<sup>583</sup> Instead of a transcendent religious identity that could have relativized the construction of identity based on German *Blut und Boden*, German Christians constructed a German religious identity completely eclipsed by German anthropological place.

German Christians fused Christianity with Nazism allowing Protestants to maintain their religious identity alongside their superior national identity. However, it is important to remember that German Christians were not a Nazi solution imposed on Protestantism. Rather, it was a Protestant initiative to adjust to the cultural milieu. Furthermore, far from being an unproblematic movement, within the church there was struggle with the Confessing Church over control (*Kirchenkampf*); there were rivalries with the German Faith Movement and the Nazi regime continued to view German Christians with suspicion.<sup>584</sup>

In 1933, a unified German Protestant Church (*Deutsche Evangelische Kirche*) was established by Hitler and in the July Protestant church elections representatives of German Christians won two-thirds of the votes giving German Christians vast

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<sup>581</sup> Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross : The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1996), 86-87.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid. For a concise account see: "Storm Troopers of Christ," in *Betrayal : German Churches and the Holocaust*, ed. Robert P. Erickson and Susannah Heschel (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).

<sup>583</sup> "Storm Troopers of Christ," 42-43.

<sup>584</sup> Ibid., 45-46.

control over church affairs. However, earlier support by Hitler himself ceased and a period of fragmentation followed the initial success of German Christians.<sup>585</sup> With the creation of a new Ministry for Church Affairs (*Reichskirchenministerium*) in July 1935 led by Hanns Kerrl, Nazi authorities sought to increase their control over the church and kicked off a period of regrouping. An increasingly systematic forced alignment (*Gleichschaltung*) of Protestantism with National Socialism started, reflecting a broader initiative of *Gleichschaltung* (1933-7) which sought to bring all institutions in line with Nazi ideology and thus under the regime's control.<sup>586</sup>

Interestingly, the influence of returning overseas missionaries also drove the Protestant church towards ethnocentrism.<sup>587</sup> If other people (*Völker*) could have their contextualized Christianity, why shouldn't Germans also have their own version? Rather than seeing a unifying humanity underlying differences in skin colour and culture, 'race' was seen as a divinely ordained absolute category. Christian faith was not meant to transcend racial differences. A Jewish Christian would remain Jewish and no baptism could 'straighten a crooked nose'. The German church was understood to be called to remain 'racially pure' and faith could never undo or transcend German identity. Instead, being a good Christian meant being a good German.<sup>588</sup>

### **The consolidation of German Identity: *Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer!***

Within Protestantism, the *völkische Blut und Boden*-identity towered unrivalled over any theological attempt to define the worth of human existence. Similarly, within the broader context of German society the *Gleichschaltung* from 1933 onward sought to eliminate all rival claims to identity besides the National Socialist ideology and the cult of the person of Hitler.<sup>589</sup> To be truly human was to be German, bound by oath to

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<sup>585</sup> Bergen divides the development of German Christians into five periods: ascendancy (1932- Fall 1933), fragmentation (Fall 1932-Summer 1935), regrouping (Summer 1935-1939), ambiguous success (1939-1945), reintegration (1945 - ). Ibid., 43-45.

<sup>586</sup> Bracher, "Stages of Totalitarian "Integration" (*Gleichschaltung*): The Consolidation of National Socialist Rule in 1933 and 1934."

<sup>587</sup> Bergen, "Storm Troopers of Christ," 47-48.

<sup>588</sup> Similar contemporary Christian racist ideologies can be found in the unfortunately named 'Christian Identity' movement and Kinism. See e.g. 'Faith and Heritage', accessed 19 October 2015, <http://faithandheritage.com/>

<sup>589</sup> This comes out most clearly with the 'Hitler Oath' (*Führereid*) of 2 August 1934 where the Wehrmacht swore unconditional obedience to the *person* of Hitler. Furthermore, with the 20 August 1934 "Law on the Allegiance of Civil Servants and Soldiers of the Armed Forces" (*Gesetz über die Vereidigung der Beamten und der Soldaten der Wehrmacht*) all previous oaths to the people and the constitution were superseded.

the person of Hitler. Slogans such as ‘*Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer!*’ (‘one people, one empire, one leader’) illustrate well the extent to which humans were confined and controlled within one place. *Gleichschaltung* was as much a consolidation of power as it was a thorough consolidation of identity. Not even the church was able to unanimously oppose influence of this *Gleichschaltung*.

We see here the construction of identity rooted in anthropological place. History, relations, identity were aligned in an attempt to create a Herderian utopia of one people, one race, one culture, one shared identity living together in one anthropological place. German Christians were the result of Christianity eclipsed by anthropological place. Powerless before the German ideals of *Blut und Boden*, Christian identity was utilized only to further reinforce a German identity rooted in anthropological place.

### **Brunner’s ‘*Mensch-von-Gott-her*’: Encountering God in Non-Place**

How did Brunner respond to this attempt to define human existence through National Socialism? Brunner saw the totalitarianism of the 1930s as the greatest threat to human existence. Nazi Germany and its attempt to exclusively define humanity according to National Socialism rested on a mistaken concept of human identity.<sup>590</sup> A state, a culture, a skin colour, or even a geographical location cannot ever make an unrivalled claim to define what it means to be human. Far from constituting an authentic human identity, Brunner saw in the collectivism of National Socialism a de-personalising trend resulting in the loss of true personal identity.<sup>591</sup> In order to restore true personal identity the power of anthropological place had to be resisted. Redemption cannot come from within anthropological place and the racial, ethnic, or geographical identities it casts; it has to come from somewhere beyond the grasp of anthropological place: God’s self-giving in Christ on the cross. Christ’s death here is a metaphorical place beyond nations, races, ethnicities. Thus in Brunner’s theology, Christ’s death constitutes a theological non-place opposed to the racial and nationalistic anthropological place Nazi Germany.

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<sup>590</sup> McGrath, *Emil Brunner : A Reappraisal*, 181.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*, 160-61. Besides Nazism, Brunner also saw the collectivism of Marxist-Leninism and the commodification of humans in modernism as threats to human identity.

Influenced by the Personalism<sup>592</sup> of Ferdinand Ebner (1882-1931)<sup>593</sup> and Martin Buber (1878-1965),<sup>594</sup> Brunner countered *Blut und Boden* with a strong emphasis on the *personal* and *relational*: The knowledge of God (and hence the knowledge of ourselves) comes through the personal encounter with God in which God reveals Godself as *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin* and restores the only truly valid human identity of *Mensch-von-Gott-her*. Humanity encounters God personally through the unconditional and total self-giving of God which correspondingly asks humanity to give itself unconditionally and totally in return. This mirrored act of human unconditional and total self-shedding severs all ties to anthropological place, its history, its identity, its relations, and the human identity as *Mensch-von-Gott-(allein!)-her* is once again bestowed upon humans. Not blood, not soil, but the self-giving person of Christ is the sole ground of identity. The encounter of God and humanity thus takes place in a non-place, at the cross, where the histories, relations, and identities constructed within anthropological places are undone.

In making this personal encounter with God the construction site of human identity, Brunner rejects both an objectivist and subjectivist approach to the dual question of knowledge of God and human identity. Objectivism for Brunner is humanity, motivated by a quest for security, attempting to, through objectification, systematisation, or institutionalisation, forcefully bring something which by its nature cannot be controlled, such as God's grace or revelation, under its control.<sup>595</sup> Humanity would like to hold the power of self-determination in its own hands thereby escaping being at the mercy of a transcendent God. National Socialism's juxtaposition of baptism and a crooked nose is one attempt to domesticate God's transcendent grace and place it under the more objective categories of race. The goal is to contain God's authority within a human-controlled authoritarian system. While Brunner restricts himself to giving examples from church history, such as the Roman Catholic papacy or its corresponding Protestant '*papierende Papst*' it is clear that this also applies to the developments taking place in Nazi Germany and thus he sees it as his responsibility to speak up especially in the times of crisis where humanity is ever

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<sup>592</sup> For the influence of Personalism on Brunner's theology see: Paul King Jewett, "Ebnerian Personalism and Its Influence Upon Brunner's Theology," *Westminster Theological Journal* 14, no. 2 (1952).

<sup>593</sup> Ferdinand Ebner, *Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten: Pneumatologische Fragmente* (Innsbruck: Brenner-Verlag, 1921).

<sup>594</sup> Martin Buber, *Ich und Du* (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1923).

<sup>595</sup> Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, 15-18.



increasingly attempting to control God's revelation and hence control human identity.<sup>596</sup>

Opposing the trend to capture and objectify is always the instinct to be free which Brunner identifies with subjectivism.<sup>597</sup> Subjectivism, where the Word of God ceases to be the authoritative revelation or foundation for faith and instead becomes a mere expression of subjective pietistic feelings (*das fromme Gefühl*), eventually leads to the subjectivist dissolution of theology (*die subjektivistische Auflösung der Theologie*).<sup>598</sup> If Brunner's objectivism describes the metanarratives of modernism, subjectivism describes the counter movement of postmodern loss of meaning. In terms of identity, objectivism stands for rigid, fixed identities along the lines of ideologies such as National Socialism or Marxist-Leninism, whereas subjectivism stands for the melting down of identities to perpetually liquid individuals completely lacking any kind of reference group. For Brunner, the solution to avoiding both extremes is not a matter of finding the right balance between two mistaken ideas (*"Es gibt keine richtige Mitte zwischen zwei Irrtümern"*).<sup>599</sup> On the one hand, neither God's truth nor human identity can be captured and controlled by humanity. On the other hand, individual humans cannot simply make up out of thin air God's revelation or their own identity. Ultimately, neither the collective nor the emancipated individual can be the ground for an authentic human identity.

### **Asymmetry and Correspondence**

Brunner's identity establishing encounter with God exhibits two main features: Asymmetry and correspondence. First of all, the encounter is asymmetrical in that it solely rests on God's initiative. God calls humanity into being from nowhere (*"Gott ruft den Menschen aus dem Nichts ins Dasein"*)<sup>600</sup> and thereby establishes humanity as an authentic being other than God (*ein reales Gegenüber*) with a unique identity. Human freedom is thus grounded in complete dependence on God.<sup>601</sup> The source of human identity is first and foremost God calling humanity into being from nowhere. Categories such as race, culture, location which belong to anthropological place are

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<sup>596</sup> See for example his indirect reference to Nazi Germany using the "Beast from the Abyss" (Revelation 11:7). Ibid., 29.

<sup>597</sup> Ibid., 18-20.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>599</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid., 38-40.

secondary to the fact that human existence depends solely on God's creative will. God calls humanity forth *ex nihilo*. In creating humanity out of non-place, no rival claims to human identity besides God's gracious and free will to let humanity be humanity are possible. Humans originate from non-place, the place where humanity is completely dependent on God, but also completely free to be the authentic other to God. Encountering God through Christ follows the same asymmetrical relationship where humanity returns to a place of total insecurity (non-place, Christ's death) to become once more completely dependent on God.

Second, this encounter is based on a primal relation (*Urbeziehung*), a relation of personal correspondence (*Verhältnis der personalen Korrespondenz*)<sup>602</sup> in which both God and humanity play a role. There are always two corresponding aspects to this foundational and continuing God-human encounter: on the one hand, the initiating and giving by *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin* who is necessarily first and, on the other hand, the receiving and responding by *Mensch-von-Gott-her* who is necessarily second and dependent on the former. This original asymmetry and personal correspondence play a central role in the reconstruction of human identity because it culminates in the death of Jesus Christ, the non-place God invites humanity into in order to bestow on it anew its identity as *Mensch-von-Gott-her*. Meeting God in the death of Christ is asymmetric because it rests on God's initiative and grace and it is a correspondence because God's total self-giving unto death invites humanity to respond with an equal self-giving 'death', a deconstruction of falsely constructed identities. In other words, *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin* invites the corrupted *Mensch-von-Gott-her* to become *Mensch-zu-Gott-zurück* (Humanity-back-to-God).

### **God's coup d'état: Breaking the spell of Anthropological Place**

Brunner employs two categories to analyse this asymmetric personal correspondence: Lordship and Communion. Divine lordship (*Gottes Herrseinwollen*) corresponds with the unconditional obedience by humanity. Humans have no power or right against God but receive their independence and freedom precisely through obedience (*Subjektsein*). Thus, "Only God is the source of the being and freedom of humanity" ("*Gott allein ist der Quell des Seins und der Freiheit des Menschen*").<sup>603</sup>

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<sup>602</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid., 44.

Divine lordship is not a means to control humanity but to set humanity free from whatever holds humanity captive, be it racism, nationalism, or ethnocentrism. Second, God gives Godself in communion to humanity and only because God gave nothing less but Godself can humans also give themselves completely to God and enter into communion (*Gemeinschaft*).<sup>604</sup> Human identity emerges from within this loving communion with God.

For Brunner, faith is unconditional trust and obedience (*unbedingter Vertrauensgehorsam*) as well as total freedom<sup>605</sup> in response to the unconditional self-giving of God in God's personal Word. Faith entails a self-giving without regard to one's self-assurance, meaning faith gives up the security and comfort that anthropological place provides and vulnerably enters into non-place where the human markers of identification such as race, culture, nationality cease to hold any power. The leaving behind of the safety structures that anthropological place provides (*Mensch-zurück-zu-Gott*) sets humanity free to be re-created in the true image of God (*Mensch-von-Gott-her*). Anthropological place here is a source of distortion both of our understanding of God and of our understanding of ourselves. It substitutes our original divine source of being and identity with constructed alternatives such as ethnocentrism, racism, nationalism, etc. God is not recognized as the one who graciously gave all of Godself for the upholding of humanity (*Gott-zum-Menschen-hin*) and humanity is not seen as having been called forth from non-place by God (*Mensch-von-Gott-her*). This personal encounter in non-place thus recasts both parties in a new light and restores both God's and humanity's original identity: "God is the God-towards-humanity because and only because he wills to be discerned in his Word; and humanity is the humanity-from-God because and only because in faith humanity has its true being."<sup>606</sup> In the divine communion, God finds Godself reconciled to humanity and humanity finds itself reconciled to God. Thus God can once again be *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin*, the source of human identity and freedom and humanity can once again be *Mensch-von-Gott-her*, existing authentically without being distorted by constructed idolatrous identities.

In the completely personal God-human encounter, we do not glimpse a 'something' but a pure 'thou' (*Du*) who rips us out of our I-isolation (*Ichtheinsamkeit*)

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<sup>604</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid., 54-55.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid., 53.

into communion (*Gemeinschaft*) with God which transforms our inner most being. Most interestingly, Brunner infuses the encounter with political meaning by calling this a *Regierungsumsturz*, a coup d'état!<sup>607</sup> When passing from anthropological place over to non-place a complete reorientation takes place. Structures that once dominated a person's identity lose their magical hold over humans and in their stead communion with God fills the space. Yet, for Brunner God is never a *Übermacht*, a totalitarian regime, who violates (*vergewaltigt*, literally meaning 'rapes') the other person in the encounter. God is not a cosmic *Führer*. The human person is not 'skipped over' or 'muted' but their personality is truly granted in their free faithful response.<sup>608</sup> The encounter with God in theological non-place enables a person to be whom the person was created to be namely something much more than skin colour, culture, or nationality, etc.

### **Death the Ultimate Non-Place**

Brunner writes that through participation in and identification with God's self-giving in God's Word, humans are given not an 'alien righteousness' (i.e. an alien or borrowed identity), but a 'real righteousness' (i.e. an identity which truly belongs to the person) is created within humans through the Holy Spirit who takes up residence within humans.<sup>609</sup> Brunner's emphasis here is on the reality (*Wirklichkeit*) of the effects of the encounter with God: "In faith, the old human *really* dies, and, in faith, the new human *really* lives."<sup>610</sup> Humans are truly newly created in the encounter with God and are truly given a completely new identity. But how does this occur?

In the context of the reality of the encounter with God through God's Word Brunner interestingly speaks of death and dying, a theme earlier discussed as part of Victor Turner's concept of liminality<sup>611</sup> and which also relates to Augé's non-place.<sup>612</sup> All previous false claims for dominance have truly been eradicated in the real participatory death of believers in the actual death of Jesus Christ. Brunner argues that, through personal correspondence, there is a mutual dying: Christ dies first and humans symbolically die in response as they are 'sucked into' Christ's

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<sup>607</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid., 74-75.

<sup>609</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>610</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

<sup>611</sup> Turner, "Liminality and Community."; "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites De Passage*."

<sup>612</sup> Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*.

death:

God is always the first, the giver; humanity is always the second, the receiver. Here too, the death we go through is Christ's death; in his death we are baptized; we are pulled with him into his dying. He himself pulls us unto his own death. (...) The whole person must give herself—therefore only the language of death is appropriate. (...) The person's death corresponds to Christ's death; Christ's death is what needed to happen to make possible the necessary death of the person; the death of Christ is the principal occurrence within the person, and yet it must simultaneously occur as the person's own death, she herself must say 'yes' to this death.<sup>613</sup>

Brunner's language of death expresses the disruptiveness of the encounter with God. Death illustrates how radical the identity as *Mensch-zurück-zu-Gott* is. A theological identity is not a compromise, not a power sharing-scheme with other claims of identification and, therefore, death is the only appropriate symbol to describe the transition from anthropological place to non-place, from a place with various human constructed claims to identity to a place where the only ground of being and source of definition is absolute dependence on God. Through baptismal dying and rising with Christ, believers take on the identity of *Mensch-zurück-zu-Gott*. Believers enter into Christ's liminality to also become liminal beings whose preliminal identities have been undone.

In addition to liminality, it also makes sense to speak of the encounter with God through mutual death as taking place in a theological non-place. Augé speaks of non-place as a place without history, relations, and identity.<sup>614</sup> God's self-giving finds its epitome in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and it is here that a theological non-place emerges. In death, history comes to an end; progress ceases. For once the stream of time stops and the dead are able to step outside of time and place. In death, all relationships are severed. The dead are surrendered to the ultimate 'others.' In death, living identities dissolve and only remnants continue as memories among the living. Far from being a state of solidity, in this case death is actually a state of plasticity or liquidity because the solid structures of anthropological place melt away and give way to freedom to be recreated and redefined. Christ carves out a space, a non-place, for humanity in which humanity is liberated. God's self-giving on the cross is an invitation to enter into this non-place and give oneself completely to God in correspondence. Through dying and rising with Christ, believers are freed from distortions in order to be able to take on and live out their new-found identity of

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<sup>613</sup> Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, 114-15.

<sup>614</sup> Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, 77-78.

*Mensch-zurück-zu-Gott*. The deadly encounter with *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin* is thus an utterly liberating encounter that untangles humans from the net of arbitrarily constructed cultural, racial, nationalistic labels that seeks to pin down and subdue humans. Death in Christ is not something to be feared but something to be embraced because it mirrors the place we are originally from: i.e. the nowhere (non-place) of creation ex nihilo where originally humanity was completely dependent on God's grace and completely free to identify in loving communion and harmony with God. Death as non-place is a place of grace. This view sees the liminality and marginality of the rejected saviour on the cross not as an encapsulated but a constructive event.

In creation, humanity was created as *Mensch-von-Gott-her* by the God who revealed Godself to be *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin*. God was the God who bestows identity on God's creation sola gratia. To be was to be from God. In redemption, humanity is invited back to a place of grace with an identity as '*Mensch-zurück-zu-Gott*'. To be justified in our existence is to return to God. In both creation and redemption, God unchangingly reveals Godself to be the same *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin* who graciously becomes the God who defines humanity. *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin* appears most distinctively in the self-giving of Jesus Christ who carves out a space through nothing less than self-sacrifice in order that humanity may follow suit and enter into this liminal redemptive space. The relation of personal correspondence suggests that Christ's death, far from absolving humanity from death, invites humanity to be put to death correspondingly. Here God kills to make alive.

### ***'Mensch-von-Gott-her' and TCKs***

For the TCK, the cross of Christ is an empowering encounter with God which gives terminally unique 'non-person' unquestionable legitimacy as *Mensch-zurück-zu-Gott* grounded in nothing less than the unconditionally and total self-giving *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin*. All other demands to identify are relativized by the only ultimate claim by God. Here TCKs can commit to relativism safely because of their 'personal truth' that they are persons of infinite value before God. Thus, a theological identity is death as well as life, emptiness as well as fullness, destruction of false claims of ultimacy that demand identification as well as construction of a legitimate ground of being that deserves absolute identification. Here there is "a non-contingent, over-

arching, and spiritual locus of integrity”<sup>615</sup> which is able to transcend the immediate calls for identification and serve as a foundation for core beliefs for higher order integration of the fragmented self.

## Conclusion

In Brunner theological identity has two aspects: First, the personal correspondence of ‘*Gott-zum-Menschen-hin*’ and ‘*Mensch-von-Gott-her*’. God defines humanity and humanity finds its ground of being in God. Second, theological identity is infused with symbols of dying. Brunner’s method of locating identity in personal correspondence with God through the mutual dying and rising with Christ presents an alternative to a National Socialist identity and remains able to counter present day claims to defining humanity along political, racial, cultural, or even religious ideologies. To use Augé’s language, Brunner countered the Nazi identity grounded in anthropological place with a theological identity grounded in a theological non-place which transcends it. Human theological identity as *Mensch-von-Gott-her* provides a transcendental ground that can serve as an internal locus of integrity fitting for TCKs.

Resembling Miyahira’s God-Christ-Believer-structure, Brunner incorporates three foundational components to answer the question of what and who human beings are. First, God is *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin*. God is the source of identity and bestows identity through nothing less than the total self-giving of Godself. This revealed *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin* stems from the eternal Trinitarian God-towards-others, Miyahira’s Trinity of ‘three betweennesses’. Second, the pinnacle of the revelation of God as *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin* takes place in the dying and rising of Jesus Christ who through his dying creates a liminal non-place for purpose of mediating between *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin* and *Mensch-zurück-zu-Gott*. The Christ here is both the God who gives Godself to humanity and humanity which gives itself back to God in response. There is both asymmetry due to God’s sole initiative and correspondence due to the mirrored actions by God and humanity. Third, humanity is redeemed through participation in Christ’s death and live out their life in liminality as *Mensch-von-Gott-her* rather than a person rooted in the constructed identities of any anthropological place. Believers are reborn through dying with Christ and live

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<sup>615</sup> Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 58, 263-64.

out their calling as liminal people. These three building blocks identified above correspond with the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of Christology, and the doctrine of believer's newfound identity.

Brunner's definition of God as *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin* adds an element of dynamic movement to Miyahira's more static 'divine betweenness'. Here Brunner's divine 'towardness' in creation and incarnation corresponds to Miyahira's 'betweenness': a desire to reach out to others and be defined within that relation. Miyahira's eternal Trinity of three 'betweennesses' constitutes the eternal ground of Brunner's *Gott-zum-Menschen-hin*: Each divine person is a divine movement from one person toward another person, between two persons. Each divine person's 'betweenness' is a movement towards the other within the eternal *Gott-zum-anderen-hin* (God-towards-an-other). Just as in Miyahira 'betweenness' defines each person in their relation between two other persons so the Father *towards* the Son and the Son *towards* the Father constitutes the Spirit's betweenness; the Spirit moves *between* the Father and the Son. The Father *towards* the Spirit and vice versa constitutes the Son's betweenness; the Son moves *between* the Spirit and the Father. The Spirit *towards* the Son and vice versa constitutes the Father's betweenness; the Father moves *between* the Son and the Spirit. God eternally transcends Godself in God's self-giving to seek a self-defining encounter with the other. Thus, 'towardness' adds a dynamic aspect to Miyahira's divine 'betweenness' and Miyahira's Trinity of 'betweenness' anchors Brunner's humanity oriented divine 'towardness' in the very being of God.

Brunner's self-giving of God in Christ's death carves out a non-place between God and humanity, a place where an encounter with God becomes possible. Miyahira's 'betweenness' between God and humanity expressed in the cross is thus not a threat to humanity which God graciously eliminates as Miyahira has argued but Christ's constructive marginality in which humanity is invited to participate. The 'betweenness' and contradiction between God and humanity which leads to the cross constitutes the very means by which the identity bestowing encounter with God is made possible: a non-place where humanity is stripped of idolatrous identities and only God's grace upholds humanity.

By participating in Christ's death, believers identify with the liminal God of 'betweenness' who acts towards others. Believers find themselves at home in non-place, in Christ's death, and are given an identity that transcends all other claims to



identity. This liberates believers to become in-between people, liminal people.

Miyahira's and Brunner's insights together constitute a solid foundation upon which to construct a TCK theology. Miyahira lends a TCK theology a structure of three key theological areas which can be contextualized using liminality as the central concept. Utilizing the language of liminality serves to construct a theology that TCKs understand. Brunner, however, adds two important aspects to this structure. First, Brunner's divine 'towardness' gives divine 'betweenness' and liminality a sense of purposeful dynamic movement. This divine movement serves to add an even more important second aspect. Through Brunner's insight a TCK theology is able to take Miyahira's God-Christ-believer structure and place it in the context of TCKs' search for identity. A TCK theology tells the story of how God through Christ bestows a truly personal identity on believers. God is presented as the source of a transcending identity, a spiritual locus of integrity. A TCK theology presents a theological answer to TCKs' question 'Who am I?'

It now remains to flesh out this theological vision of an identity bestowing God towards humanity who through Christ, the God-Man betwixt and between, invites believers to be recreated in the image of a liminal God. This task will take up the remainder of this dissertation.

## Chapter 14

### Thomas Torrance: A Theology of Mediation

#### Introduction

Chapter twelve argued for ‘betweenness’ and liminality as a viable theological concept in a contextualized theology and introduced a ‘God-Christ-Believer’ structure for a TCK theology. Chapter thirteen recast this structure as a theological answer to TCKs’ question of identity and added a dimension of dynamic movement to ‘betweenness’ and liminality through divine ‘towardness.’

Both Nozomu Miyahira and Emil Brunner’s insights are of great benefit. However, it is time to flesh out this basic theological approach. What is needed is a theological ally with a proven track record to show more clearly how the concept of divine liminality plays out in the economy of salvation. This role falls to the theologian Thomas F. Torrance whose mature theology strongly features ‘mediation’. Mediation, central to both Christianity<sup>616</sup> as well as TCKs<sup>617</sup>, constitutes the key to making the theology of Torrance applicable to TCKs.

This chapter focuses on ‘mediation’ as a central theme in Thomas Torrance’s theology in order to adapt his robust Trinitarian theology and soteriology for a TCK theology. First, this chapter shows how Torrance’s unique upbringing as a missionary kid makes him a fitting dialogue partner and, second, makes the case for ‘mediation’ as a central concept underlying Torrance’s life and theology. By using Torrance’s theology of mediation to construct a TCK theology upon the foundation established in the previous two chapters, TCKs will be better able to recognize Christianity as a point of orientation.

This chapter consists of four sections: First, it establishes why Torrance is of interest. Second, it explores Torrance’s unique biographical background as a quasi-TCK. Third, it analyses the role that mediation plays in his theology. Finally, it lays out how Torrance’s theology takes a TCK theology beyond its foundation outlined in chapters twelve and thirteen.

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<sup>616</sup> See for example: Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*.

<sup>617</sup> Bochner, *The Mediating Person: Bridges between Cultures*.

## Why Thomas Torrance?

Four reasons make Torrance a valuable resource. First, Torrance provides us with a robust Trinitarian framework needed to expand our earlier insights.<sup>618</sup> Elmer Colyer describes Torrance as “one of the premier theologians in the second half of the twentieth century” and “a true theological heavy-weight.”<sup>619</sup> Torrance’s Trinitarian theology ought to suffice as a rich enough resource to draw on.

Second, Torrance’s work is appropriate for this project precisely because he is a missionary kid himself.<sup>620</sup> Although Torrance would most likely not have self-identified as a TCK as such a label did not exist when he grew up in the way it does today, he can still be considered an appropriate dialog partner.

Third, themes of mediation, common to TCKs’ experience, can be discerned throughout his theology<sup>621</sup> as well as his life as an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland engaging in ecumenical dialogue.

Finally, Torrance understood his identity primarily in theological terms. His unique international upbringing clearly raised significant questions of cultural and personal identity which he answered theologically.<sup>622</sup> For Torrance, it is God through Christ, the ‘personalising person’, who ultimately grants us, ‘personalised persons’, true personhood.<sup>623</sup> It is therefore fitting to employ Torrance as a platform from which to proceed with a TCK theology.

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<sup>618</sup> Torrance’s three major works on the Trinity are: Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons; Trinitarian Perspectives : Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994); *The Trinitarian Faith : The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988). For a topically arranged guide to Torrance’s works see: Elmer M. Colyer, “An Introductory Reader’s Guide to the Published Works of T. F. Torrance,” *Participatio Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship* Supplemental Vol. 1 (2011).

<sup>619</sup> *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 11.

<sup>620</sup> For works on the life of Torrance see: Alister E. McGrath, *T.F. Torrance : An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999); Jock Stein, “The Legacy of the Gospel,” in *A Passion for Christ : The Vision That Ignites Ministry*, ed. Gerrit Dawson and Jock Stein (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1999); David W. Torrance, “Thomas Forsyth Torrance: Minister of the Gospel, Pastor, and Evangelical Theologian,” in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology : Theologians in Dialogue with T.F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001); Elmer M. Colyer, “Torrance’s Life & Achievement,” in *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2001); Paul D. Molnar, “Introducing T. F. Torrance,” in *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity* (Farnham, England: Ashgate Pub. Ltd., 2009).

<sup>621</sup> See, for example: “Mutual Mediation” in Elmer M. Colyer, “Thomas F. Torrance on the Holy Spirit,” *Word & World* 23, no. 2 (2003). Also: “Double Mediation” in Gary W. Deddo, “The Holy Spirit in the Theology of T. F. Torrance,” in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T.F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011).

<sup>622</sup> Alister McGrath, personal communication (April 9, 2013).

<sup>623</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 160-61.

### **The Making of a Mediator: Torrance as Quasi-TCK**

Before exploring the theme of mediation in the theology of Torrance, it is worth to mentioning some of his biographical details. Torrance exhibits some common TCK-traits which go hand in hand with his mediation-featuring theology. This section is a re-appreciation of Torrance from a TCK-perspective and establishes Torrance as a quasi-TCK.<sup>624</sup>

Torrance's early years follow the pattern of cross-cultural moving and high mobility which have come to define today's TCKs.<sup>625</sup> He was born in August 1913 in Chengdu, West China, to a Scottish father and an Anglican mother, who worked there as missionaries. Growing up as the second of six children, Torrance spent the first 14 years of his childhood in China before the mother and kids eventually repatriated to Scotland for good in Spring 1927.<sup>626</sup> In Chengdu, Torrance attended a missionary kid school established by Canadian missionaries. This school, simply referred to as the 'Canadian School', was located on the campus of the West China Union University and was part of a bigger third culture community which included four major missionary groups: American Baptists, English Quakers, Canadian Methodists and Methodist Episcopalians. Alister McGrath notes that "[t]here was a degree of tension within the faculty of this university between liberal and conservative approaches to Christianity, reflecting similar tensions within western Protestantism as a whole."<sup>627</sup> Different cultural and linguistic aspects can be identified in Torrance's life: Scottish, English, Canadian, U.S.American, and Chinese. Growing up within this third culture that emerged out of the complex interactions between these different cultural and religious groups working together, negotiating identities and positions must have been a daily occurrence in Torrance's early life.

It is usual for missionary families to return to their sending countries for a furlough from time to time in order to report to their churches and secure financial

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<sup>624</sup> Having been born before 1947, Torrance would fall into the category of "older ATCKs" (Adult Third Culture Kid) as opposed to "younger ATCKs. For how Torrance's generation differs from post WWII TCKs, see: David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, "Adult Third Culture Kids Survey Results," in *Third Culture Kids : Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition* (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2009).

<sup>625</sup> McGrath, *T.F. Torrance : An Intellectual Biography*, 3-85; Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 39 - 84.

<sup>626</sup> Paul D. Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity* (Farnham, England: Ashgate Pub., 2009), 3.

<sup>627</sup> McGrath, *T.F. Torrance : An Intellectual Biography*, 13-14.

support. The Torrance family's first repatriation to Scotland occurred in 1920. This was the first time for Torrance to see for himself Scotland, his father's country, and England, his mother's country. In 1921, after approximately a year at the family's home in Lanarkshire, the Torrances returned to Chengdu to resume their missionary work.<sup>628</sup> Torrance's second time to set foot on Scottish land came in 1927 when the family went on their second and final furlough. Increasing hostility towards missionaries and Christianity left several western missionaries injured or dead, mission buildings looted and damaged and shocked the expatriate community. All women and children were ordered to evacuate Chengdu for the coast. The Torrance family, minus the father, escaped to Shanghai where, after several weeks, Torrance senior joined them for their voyage to England to return to Scotland.<sup>629</sup>

Several TCK themes emerge from these cycles of repatriation and expatriation. While the fact that Torrance would have to return to his father's country at some point was a given, repatriation nevertheless must have been a strange experience to return so suddenly and among extreme uncertainty.<sup>630</sup> First, in 1920 Torrance was temporarily transplanted into a whole new Scottish world essentially putting his life and identity on a hold until he was able to return to 'normal' life back 'home' in Chengdu. Then, in 1927 Torrance dramatically lost his familiar third culture world in Chengdu for good. Furthermore, this was followed by years of separation from his father who returned to China by himself in 1928 and stayed until his retirement in 1934. According to Elmer Colyer, Torrance recalls this second repatriation as an extremely negative one, hinting at the possibility that Torrance transacted his repatriation as encapsulated.<sup>631</sup> Colyer attributes this to the difficult economic situation in Scotland and also remarks how the fact that the Canadian school in Chengdu was not up to par with Scottish education forced Torrance to "[work] extremely hard to catch up on his studies."<sup>632</sup> Such adjustment difficulties during repatriation due to various reasons including needing to switch schooling systems are

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<sup>628</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>630</sup> Compare for example: Carolyn D. Smith, ed. *Strangers at Home : Essays on the Effects of Living Overseas and Coming "Home" to a Strange Land* (Bayside, New York: Aletheia Publications, 1996).

<sup>631</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 37. For encapsulating marginality see: Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training."

<sup>632</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 37.

common themes among TCKs.<sup>633</sup> The long separation from his father and the adjustment to an unfamiliar Scottish environment must have made the experience difficult for the young Torrance who was still in his developmental years. It is thus understandable that from his early years Torrance wanted to become a missionary and continue his father's missionary work in West China, which was more of a home to him than his father's Scotland or mother's England.<sup>634</sup> Torrance's instinct was to return to the familiar life he knew how to live.

In 1931 Torrance started studying at University of Edinburgh where he eventually began the formal study of theology at New College in 1934. However, as can be expected from growing up a TCK, Torrance's patterns of mobility continued even then.<sup>635</sup> Having been awarded the Blackie Fellowship in 1936 due to his language skills, Torrance travelled for half a year through the Middle East visiting Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, as well as Turkey, Greece, and Italy.<sup>636</sup> Interestingly, he was asked to 'shepherd' a group of students who were visiting the Near East as part of their studies presumably due to Torrance's remarkable international survival skills, a characteristic shared among many TCKs.<sup>637</sup> He returned to Scotland in summer 1936 and graduated in 1937. Furthermore, after graduating from Edinburgh Torrance was awarded the Aitken Fellowship enabling him to continue postgraduate research at a place of his choice. This opened the door for Torrance to visit Germany, Berlin and Marburg, in order to study German before commencing his studies under the Swiss theologian Karl Barth in Basel, Switzerland, where he stayed for one year from 1937 to 1938.<sup>638</sup> His dissertation yet to be completed, Torrance then was persuaded to move to upstate New York, U.S.A., where he taught at Auburn Theological Seminary from 1938 to 1939, instead of returning for a second year to Basel.

Although having been offered an attractive job at Princeton University while in

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<sup>633</sup> For how educational differences can impact TCKs, see: Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 195 - 215.

<sup>634</sup> Torrance, "Thomas Forsyth Torrance: Minister of the Gospel, Pastor, and Evangelical Theologian," 5.

<sup>635</sup> See e.g. 'Migratory Instinct': Cottrell and Useem, "ATCKs Maintain Global Dimensions Throughout Their Lives."; Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 126-29.

<sup>636</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 38; McGrath, *T.F. Torrance : An Intellectual Biography*, 39-42.

<sup>637</sup> *T.F. Torrance : An Intellectual Biography*, 39.

<sup>638</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 6.

the States, the deteriorating political situation in Europe made him decline the opportunity. McGrath writes about a conversation Torrance had with Emil Brunner in June 1939 about whether to return to Europe or not which ended with the two of them agreeing that it would be best to return before German submarines would make the voyage too risky.<sup>639</sup> While it was a difficult decision to leave such an attractive offer behind and return to an uncertain situation in Europe, McGrath interestingly comments that nevertheless “[Torrance] believed it to have been right and inevitable. *His place was in Scotland*, to which he would return. War was looming; but *Scotland was where he belonged*.”<sup>640</sup> Curiously, Torrance’s brother, David W. Torrance, also remarks that Torrance’s decision to return “proved to be far reaching. His future, after the war, was to be *in his own country of Scotland*.”<sup>641</sup> Thus, in the crisis of the rumours of another war, a coming to terms of Torrance with his Scottish heritage can be witnessed. While his missionary upbringing in China shaped his life tremendously, the impact that Scotland had on Torrance and the contribution Torrance would make to Scotland cannot be ignored.<sup>642</sup> Until then, Torrance’s eagerness to chase opportunities abroad seems to suggest that he wanted to live the life of a global nomad, avoiding Scotland. His decision to commit to remaining in Scotland however does not necessarily mean he stopped being a quasi-TCK. Instead, it shows how Torrance transacted his marginality more and more constructively by choosing a place where he would make a lasting contribution and finding a field where he could excel. Torrance, after a period of extremely high mobility from his early to late 20s, came to terms with his transcultural identity. Thus he repatriated once again to the U.K. and enrolled at University of Oxford from 1939 to 1940 to work on his dissertation.

A final period of high mobility and transculturality followed. In 1940, Torrance was ordained a minister of the Church of Scotland and in 1943 took a position as chief of Church of Scotland’s Huts and Canteens. The job entailed providing pastoral and practical support to Scottish soldiers overseas and Torrance accepted in hope it

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<sup>639</sup> McGrath, *T.F. Torrance : An Intellectual Biography*, 58.

<sup>640</sup> Ibid.(Emphasis mine)

<sup>641</sup> Torrance, "Thomas Forsyth Torrance: Minister of the Gospel, Pastor, and Evangelical Theologian," 11.(Emphasis mine)

<sup>642</sup> David Fergusson, "Torrance as a Scottish Theologian," *Participatio Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship* Vol. 2 (2010). Fergusson argues that while Torrance was deeply suspicious of Scottish nationalism and would have strongly disapproved of a partisan national identity, we nevertheless cannot overlook the strong connections Torrance maintained with Scotland.

would take him back to Palestine. Based in Cairo, he served soldiers in Tobruk and Tripoli, North Africa, in preparation for the invasion of Italy and later also provided food and spiritual guidance to soldiers at the front in Italy, at times even at the risk of his own life.<sup>643</sup> After the war ended, Torrance repatriated to Scotland.

This brief survey of Torrance's patterns of high mobility and culture-crossing, the central two marks of a TCK, concludes here. If anything, his life shows that the context of extreme mobility and cross cultural experience in which he developed his sense of self cannot be neglected when looking at his life's work and theology. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Torrance was aware of the implications of growing up as a TCK between worlds. When invited to succeed Barth in Basel in 1961, Torrance sadly declined the offer. McGrath comments that Torrance hesitated because he would have had to lecture extensively in German and his kids would have had to enrol in a German speaking school.<sup>644</sup> According to Colyer, this decision to turn down the offer was partly influenced by Torrance not wanting to "subject his children (two sons and a daughter) to the disruptive change in culture and language in a move from Edinburgh to Basel."<sup>645</sup> In other words, Torrance chose not to raise his own children as TCKs. This shows that while Torrance definitely succeeded in transacting his own international experience constructively, he did understand the potentially encapsulating marginalization his children might have faced, indicating that the difficult initial repatriation to Scotland when he was a teenager, the painful adjustment to a new educational system, and years of separation from his father must have left a lasting and defining mark on Torrance. The bold step to reject the offer of a lifetime shows his awareness of the impact of cultural marginality and the mixed feelings about the urge to move abroad involving his non-TCK family. It also reflects his satisfaction of having been able to find his place at the University of Edinburgh after the more turbulent first half of his life.

As we can see, Torrance's highly internationally mobile life, starting with his birth in China and first transcontinental move when he was 7 or 8 years old and continuing until his early thirties, led Torrance to travel, live, study, and work on four continents (Asia, Europe, North America, Africa) and was marked by high mobility and intercultural contact especially in his twenties. Torrance thus qualifies as a full-

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<sup>643</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 11-12.

<sup>644</sup> McGrath, *T.F. Torrance : An Intellectual Biography*, 102 -03.

<sup>645</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 44.



fledged TCK in terms of mobility and cross-culture experience. Furthermore, Paul Molnar writes that “Torrance retained some Arabic throughout his life” and “remained fluent in Chinese, Greek, Latin, German, and French”<sup>646</sup> and Colyer also remarks that “Torrance’s mastery of other languages is impressive. He has published scholarly articles in Greek, Latin, French and German.”<sup>647</sup> The exhibition of an eagerness to continue his international involvement even after repatriation<sup>648</sup> and advanced language skills<sup>649</sup> both match the TCK profile. For Torrance, the negotiation and mediation between places, languages, cultures, and beliefs flow naturally from his TCK heritage. Thus, as this short biography of the first half of Torrance’s life indicates and TCK studies predict, it is only natural that Torrance through his experience of liminality would identify with a mediator role in his life. Furthermore, as a missionary kid he thoroughly understood the need to mediate (i.e. contextualize) the Christian message to its audience meaningfully through language and culture. The idea of mediation in Torrance’s mind is thus connected with the idea of revelation, of making the obscure familiar and of reconciliation, of restoring peace between God and humanity in its particular context.

### **The Ecumenical Torrance: Mediation at Work**

His inclination to mediate can be seen in his ecumenical engagement in the second half of his life. After the foundation of the World Council of Churches in 1948, Torrance attended the Faith and Order Conference in 1952 and also served on the Faith and Order Commission from 1952 to 1962.<sup>650</sup> Furthermore, he represented the Church of Scotland in their dialog with the Church of England from 1949 to 1951.<sup>651</sup>

Torrance also engaged Roman Catholicism, as can be seen in his involvement in the Reformed-Roman Catholic Study Commission on the Eucharist in 1974 in the Netherlands and in the colloquy in 1975 in Switzerland on Karl Rahner’s work on the Trinity. His identification as mediator shows in the optimism Paul Molnar

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<sup>646</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 6.

<sup>647</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 37, footnote 15.

<sup>648</sup> For continuing patterns of mobility, compare: Cottrell and Useem, "ATCKs Maintain Global Dimensions Throughout Their Lives."

<sup>649</sup> For linguistic skills, compare: Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds. Revised Edition*, 118-22.

<sup>650</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 46.

<sup>651</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 16.

observes<sup>652</sup> as Torrance truly believed Rahner's work offered "the possibility of some real ecumenical convergence between East and West, Catholic and Evangelical Christians."<sup>653</sup>

Finally, as mediator Torrance is probably best known for his role as a negotiator between the Word Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Greek Orthodox Churches on the doctrine of the Trinity. Torrance initiated the dialogue in 1977, which culminated in the "historic agreement" in 1991.<sup>654</sup>

Thus, looking at Torrance from the perspective of the TCK profile reveals more than just a theologian who happened to grow up as a missionary kid. While the theological heritage of his upbringing as missionary kid is obvious and often remarked on, perhaps it is only after 'TCK' became an established category through which to view people and understand their behaviour that the fact that mediation features so dominantly in his life, his work as a cleric, and in his theology can fully be appreciated. This connection between Torrance and TCKs seems to have eluded previous biographers and students of his theology but the recent scholarship on TCKs should add an additional layer of depth to the understanding of this remarkable individual. This is not to claim that a TCK-perspective exclusively reveals Torrance's identity but to suggest that TCK research is helpful in understanding Torrance, especially in terms of the theme of mediation in his life and work. Not only is viewing Torrance as a TCK warranted, the use of his theology to construct a TCK theology is suitable. Having established Torrance as a quasi-TCK deeply familiar with mediation in his upbringing and life, attention is now turned to mediation as featured in his theology.

### **Mapping 'Mediation' in Torrance's Mature Theology**

It is important to note that this section and the subsequent chapters are not a comprehensive and extensive treatment of Torrance's theology but rather an appreciation of his Trinitarian ideas with the specific agenda of highlighting the theme of mediation within God and in the economy of salvation to construct a TCK theology. The theme of mediation features prominently in Torrance's writing,

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<sup>652</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>653</sup> Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives : Toward Doctrinal Agreement*, 77.

<sup>654</sup> For results of the discussions see: *Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Churches*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985). *Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Churches*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1993).

especially in his final major work on the Trinity.<sup>655</sup> ‘Mediate’ and other forms related to the verb occur a total of 77 times throughout *The Christian Doctrine of God*.<sup>656</sup>

Torrance never defines the word but rather takes its meaning for granted.

Furthermore, he applies mediation in a variety of differing contexts, from mediation among the divine persons in the economy, to mediation in the apostolic tradition or believers’ fundamental evangelical experience. The frequent occurrences of mediation in Torrance’s later writings point to its high saliency in his mature thought. The diverse contexts in which he uses ‘mediation’ show what a rich concept mediation must have been in his mind for him to bring these various aspects of mediation under one umbrella term.

‘Mediation’, stemming from the Latin *mediatus* meaning ‘placed in the middle,’ most commonly refers to the act of intervening between conflicting parties in order to achieve reconciliation. Furthermore, mediation is also used to refer to the act of transferring something through a medium. Mediation thus describes a third thing or agent that stands between two others in order to bring about a resolution and/or make access possible between the two.

Torrance’s use of mediation can be divided into two areas. First, in the context of creation and culture, he uses mediation to describe how creation/creatures are the medium that make God’s revelation accessible and meaningful. Second, in the context of God, he ascribes mediation to Godself, including Christ’s assumed humanity. Each area of mediation is treated in turn.

### **Mediation in Culture, Creation, and Canons**

Within the context of creation and culture, mediation is employed as follows. First, the apostolic tradition mediated the gospel to the church in the Mediterranean world.<sup>657</sup> Mediation here refers to the contextualisation of the gospel in Hellenism. Second, creation is described as the concrete medium God designed for God’s self-revelation and self-communication.<sup>658</sup> Creation is thus the stage through which God reveals Godself. Third, the shared evangelical experience of believers mediates

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<sup>655</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*.

<sup>656</sup> ‘Mediate’ (and related forms) occurs in *The Christian Doctrine of God* as follows: ‘mediated’ (25 times), ‘mediates’ (3 times), ‘mediate’ (4 times), ‘mediating’ (4 times), ‘mediation’ (11 times), ‘mediator’ (18 times), ‘medium’ (8 times), ‘mediatorial’ (4 times).

<sup>657</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, x, 177.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

God's revelation to believers.<sup>659</sup> Fourth, the New Testament (including life of Christ, gospels, epistles) mediates God's triune revelation to believers.<sup>660</sup> The gospels and epistles are the medium through which God reveals God's self-communication to the readers. Fifth, the Old Testament mediates God's revelation.<sup>661</sup> Torrance here emphasises the continuity of God's revelation through God's Word and Spirit in the New Testament with God's revelation to the people of Israel in the Old Testament.<sup>662</sup> Sixth, Holy Scripture in general mediates God's revelation to believers.<sup>663</sup> Seventh, Israel as well as God's covenanted relations with Israel are the medium through which God reveals Godself and through which God establishes the proper context of God's self-revelation in Word and Spirit.<sup>664</sup> Torrance stresses the importance of the concrete history of Israel through which believers can understand God's self-revelation. Eighth, the history of salvation, meaning our concrete experience of God, mediates God's self-revelation.<sup>665</sup>

Writings, history, experience, tradition, people, and covenants are examples of the media through which God's self-revelation is actualised in a form that can be appreciated by people within their contexts. This mediation is a type of contextualisation of revelation that gives meaning within culture to God's revelation and it is only natural to find these themes in Torrance who, due to his upbringing as a missionary kid in China, always had a "missionary sensibility."<sup>666</sup> In Torrance's mind, the question of how missionaries can make Christ known to others in their respective situation is connected with the question of how God made Godself known to the world. God's revelation always comes and is made meaningful through a medium that gives it a tangible expression. Nature, history, experience, culture, language (written and spoken), etc. are 'a third' positioned in the middle, between God and humanity, through which the reconciling revelation of God is made possible. Mediation in creation, in the Old Testament, and in Israel and her covenantal relationship established by God play an important role in Torrance's thought as this mediation points to its proper fulfilment in 'the mediation of

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<sup>659</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>660</sup> Ibid., 18, 22, 35, 38, 49, 60, 168.

<sup>661</sup> Ibid., 39, 68, 67, 69.

<sup>662</sup> *The Mediation of Christ*, 7-9.

<sup>663</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 12, 44, 50.

<sup>664</sup> Ibid., 14, 67, 68, 70.

<sup>665</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>666</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 51.

revelation' and 'the mediation of reconciliation' in the incarnate Christ at the fullness of time.<sup>667</sup> These mediations are, in a sense, reflections of the mediation between God and humanity in the historical missions of the Son and Spirit to be discussed next.

### **God's Mediating Missions**

It is in this rich context of mediation that Torrance's God emerges as a self-mediating God. Applied to God, Torrance uses mediation in the following ways. First and foremost, Torrance describes Christ as mediator in a threefold way: (A) mediator between God and humanity, (B) the historic medium of God's self-revelation, and (C) the mediator of the Spirit to us. Second, Torrance applies mediation to the work of the Spirit. Third, mediation describes God's self-mediation.

(A) Christ as sole mediator between God and humanity<sup>668</sup> is a well-established theological concept and Torrance uses mediator as the primary category through which to understand the person and work of Christ.<sup>669</sup> The more unique feature of Christ's mediatorial activity in Torrance's theology is the two-fold movement from God to humanity as well as from humanity to God.<sup>670</sup> Both authentic divine revelation and proper human reception coincide in the one person of Christ. Mediation through Christ is thus a two-way street between God and humanity in which Christ is active on both ends.

(B) Through Christ's incarnation, God's revelation embeds itself within creation with Christ living out divine revelation in humanly recognizable form. As such, Christ is the absolute centre of revelation: the "objective personal self-revelation of God," "the exclusive language of God," the "content" of revelation.<sup>671</sup> Furthermore, Christ is the exclusive "historic medium"<sup>672</sup> who mediates God the

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<sup>667</sup> Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 9; *Incarnation : The Person and Life of Christ*, 37-56.

<sup>668</sup> See e.g. 1 Timothy 2.5

<sup>669</sup> For Torrance's use of Christ as "mediator" see: Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 1, 11, 17, 41 (n. 20), 52, 78, 79, 82, 94, 136, 43, 60, 96, 221, 46, 49, 51. Torrance also describes Christ's work as "mediatorial office/activity/passion" (p. 180, 196, 249, 252). Also: "mediation between God and man" (p.78), "mediating bridge between God and man" (p. 80).

<sup>670</sup> Ibid., 11, 41, 78, 149.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>672</sup> Ibid., 7.

Father,<sup>673</sup> God's Word in human speech,<sup>674</sup> God's revelation,<sup>675</sup> the triune God,<sup>676</sup> God's redeeming love,<sup>677</sup> and God's nature and divine Life.<sup>678</sup> Christ's mediation anchors God's revelation in time and place.

(C) Christ mediates the Spirit to us.<sup>679</sup> In the incarnation, Christ anoints the assumed human nature with his Spirit thereby mediating the Spirit from himself through his incarnate self to humanity.<sup>680</sup> This is also a two-fold movement by Christ who both gives the Spirit as his own Spirit and faithfully receives the Spirit on behalf of humanity in his mediatorial role between God and humanity.<sup>681</sup>

This mediation in Christ encompasses not only revelation but also divine reconciliation in that the incarnate Christ both extends God's reconciliation to humanity and at the same time properly accepts God's self-revelation and displays perfect obedience to God as one on the receiving end of revelation and reconciliation. The 'mediation of revelation' and the 'mediation of reconciliation' are inseparable.<sup>682</sup> The reconciliation unveils the revelation of God and the revelatory self-giving of God constitutes the reconciliation with humanity.<sup>683</sup>

Second, Torrance applies mediation to the Spirit: The Spirit mediates the Son (God's revelation, knowledge of God) to humanity.<sup>684</sup> While the Spirit does not add any further content to the revelation of the Son, the Spirit is the mediator who actualises the revelation of God through the Son within us.<sup>685</sup> It is in the Spirit that believers recognise the self-revelation that Christ incarnate is. The Spirit is thus not a substitute mediator for an absent Christ, but the mediatorial activity of the Spirit unites believers to Christ the mediator.<sup>686</sup> It is not the work of the Spirit to draw attention to himself but to illuminate the Son and the Father for believers. The Spirit's mediatorial activity remains hidden.<sup>687</sup> Importantly, similarly to Christ's two-

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<sup>673</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>674</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>675</sup> Ibid., 33, 82.

<sup>676</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>677</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>678</sup> Ibid., 7, 99, 248.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid., 146, 48.

<sup>680</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 200-01.

<sup>681</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 149.

<sup>682</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>683</sup> For more on mediation, revelation and reconciliation see: *The Mediation of Christ*.

<sup>684</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 17, 18, 41, 65, 101, 41, 47, 51, 204.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid., 147, 96.

<sup>686</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 201.

<sup>687</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 151.

fold movement, there is also a “two-fold movement of the Holy Spirit from above and from below, along with the two-fold movement of the incarnate Son in receiving the Holy Spirit and giving him to us.”<sup>688</sup> The Holy Spirit is the “creative Agent in mediating knowledge of God to us in himself and the creative Agent in our reception and understanding of that revelation.”<sup>689</sup> The Spirit both reveals the Son to us and receives the Son within us, from above and from below.<sup>690</sup> In the case of both the Son and the Spirit, there is a dynamic two-way mediation between God and humanity through the Spirit/Son. Furthermore, there is a dynamic two way mediation by the Son and the Spirit *of each other*.

Combining the mediation of the Son and the mediation of the Spirit, Torrance speaks of both the Son and the Spirit mediating the revelation of God the Father<sup>691</sup> as well as the Son and Spirit mediating the eternal Trinity to us.<sup>692</sup> Torrance’s unique mediation of the Spirit by the Son and of the Son by the Spirit who together mediate the Trinity has come to be known as “mutual mediation”<sup>693</sup> or “double mediation.”<sup>694</sup> In the economy, each of the two divine persons mutually give and receive each other in a two-fold movement to the effect that the believer can, in the Holy Spirit and through the incarnate Son, participate in the communion of the Trinity. Interestingly, Torrance occasionally also describes the Son and the Spirit as constituting a single two-fold movement of self-mediation: the Son from above or without and the Spirit from below or within.<sup>695</sup> According to Paul Molnar, the Spirit and the Son’s mediation are not to be separated since both persons are consubstantial (*ὁμοούσιος*) with the Father.<sup>696</sup> The Holy Spirit is always the Spirit of the Father and the Son and must not be confused with the spirit of the church or the spirit of humanity.<sup>697</sup> Thus, Christ’s mediatorial work takes place in the power of the Spirit and the Spirit’s mediatorial movement takes place through the Son’s incarnation: There is only one

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<sup>688</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>689</sup> Ibid., 101; Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 225.

<sup>690</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 147.

<sup>691</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>692</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>693</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 221-27.

<sup>694</sup> Deddo, "The Holy Spirit in the Theology of T. F. Torrance," 96-98. See also: Colyer, "Thomas F. Torrance on the Holy Spirit."

<sup>695</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 32.

<sup>696</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 189-90.

<sup>697</sup> Ibid., 196.

mediating operation by the triune God taking place from the Father, through/in the Son, in/through the Spirit.

Third, Torrance can thus naturally apply mediation to Godself. Not only is God the subject who mediates revelation and knowledge of God to humanity<sup>698</sup> but God is the one who mediates Godself in “self-mediation (...) as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>699</sup> In other words, together with the two-fold movement of mediation by the Son and the Spirit, God appears in three roles in the mediation: As the one *who* is mediated (Father), the one *through* whom God is mediated (Son/Spirit), and the one *to* whom God is mediated (Son/Spirit). The Son and Spirit appear in both roles due to the mutual mediation.

As shown, Torrance sees creation itself as the medium of God’s revelation to humanity but more importantly sees God’s self-mediation in continuity with this activity of mediation. While ‘medium’ can invoke images of mediacy as opposed to immediacy, far from seeing the Son and the Spirit as Arian intermediaries, Torrance sees Christ as Godself united to creation and the Spirit as Godself imparted to the believer.<sup>700</sup> In this mediation by Spirit and Son, God is *immediately* and *really* present. Torrance’s Trinitarian theology is a “realist theology”<sup>701</sup> in which something of God in God’s very being can truly be known through the mediating movement of Son and Spirit in the economy of salvation. The content and the method are identical or, in other words, what God does in God’s self-mediation is in synch with who God is in Godself. In the economy, God revealed Godself to be the triune self-mediator.

It is worth reiterating that for Torrance the mediation of God usually involves a two-fold movement of representing both sides that are brought together in mediation. While the initiative of mediating between God and humanity lies solely with God in the incarnation of the Son and the pouring out of the Spirit, God both gives Godself through Godself to humanity as much as God receives Godself in Godself on humanity’s behalf and for the benefit of humanity. God’s self-mediation is founded on the sovereign freedom of God to reveal Godself and not on some quality found within humanity itself. In this self-mediation God provides God’s own ground of revelation as the possibility of theology. Molnar comments:

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<sup>698</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 106-07.

<sup>699</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>700</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>701</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 30-31.



[W]e know God only because of the grace that God has shown us by becoming incarnate in Jesus Christ and uniting us to Christ in faith through the Holy Spirit so that we may actually think from a center in God provided by God himself in the incarnation and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.<sup>702</sup>

In God's self-mediation, God establishes within creation a divinely appointed point of contact as opposed to a point of contact within humans from which to think theologically about God without mythological projection.

Mediation in Torrance's mind is thus a rich concept ranging in meaning from contextualization to divine revelation and also personal Trinitarian relations. It arises naturally from Torrance's background as quasi-TCK, and finds expression in his theology. Theologically, it adds further depth and breadth to 'betweenness' and 'towardness' explored earlier.

### **Torrance's Mediation, Miyahira's 'Betweenness', and Brunner's 'Towardness'**

Torrance's mediation helps build on Miyahira's and Brunner's insights. First of all, all three are engaged in theological contextualisation. Miyahira contextualises theology through the reinterpretation of the triune formula using 'betweenness' as his guide. He seeks to make sense of the traditional theological formula by finding points of contact in his particular Japanese context. Brunner recasts theology as the story of God-towards-humanity bestowing a new identity on humanity in the context of National Socialism's construction of German identity. Torrance also engages in a contextualisation of sorts in that he describes the divine missions in terms of 'mediations' and also sees mediation at work in the context of scripture, history, experience, the apostles' work. He formulates theology in terms that are native to his context as quasi-TCK. He is making sense of his own experience growing up witnessing his parents mediate the gospel to the people of China and during his adult life teaching and preaching theology as well as engaging in constructive talks with other Christian traditions. In 'mediation', Torrance has found a unifying metaphor which lets him see his life and work in the light of God's mediation. Mediation constitutes the overarching theme which connects his upbringing as missionary kid, the general presence of God among humanity, and the specific salvific actions of the triune God. He seeks to uncover a principle or logic which permeates his experience and theology.

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<sup>702</sup> Ibid., 35.

Two features unique to Torrance's theology of mediation stand out in contrast to Miyahira and Brunner. First, while the latter mostly focus on the Son in his work of bringing about concord between God and sinful humanity and restoring humanity's identity, Torrance's theology paints a much more detailed picture of the work of both the Son and the Spirit, who together bring about the mediation of revelation and reconciliation between God and humanity and the renewal of the believer. Miyahira does describe the Spirit as being between the Father and the Son but leaves the question of the 'betweenness' of the Spirit in the economy of salvation unanswered. In contrast, through his 'mutual mediation', Torrance displays a much better grasp of how the mediatorial work of the Spirit fits together with the mediatorial work of the Son. In a sense, Torrance's two-way mediation of the Son and the Spirit much better describes 'betweenness' and 'towardness' in the economy than Miyahira or Brunner does. The Son mediates between his two natures: on the one hand, he gives the Holy Spirit and, on the other hand, he receives the Holy Spirit, making possible the pouring out of the Spirit to all other people. The Spirit thus mediated through the reconciling work of the Son also mediates between Christ and the believer: on the one hand, he reveals Christ from God's side and, on the other hand, he accepts Christ within the believer enabling each individual to identify with Christ and become a child of God.

Furthermore, Torrance's two-way mediation by the Son and Spirit give Brunner's 'towardness' an even more dynamic spin. God not only moves toward humanity but in God humanity is moved toward God. Through the two-way mutual mediation of Son and Spirit believers are known by God and know God (knowing, revelation), believers are accepted by God and accept God (trusting, reconciliation), and, believers are honoured by God as God's children and honour God as their heavenly Father (honouring). All three aspects of Miyahira's concord thus fit nicely into the Torrance's mediation.

Finally, Torrance adds an important element to Miyahira and Brunner: The connection between who God is and what God does. Miyahira applies 'betweenness' primarily to God's being in Godself: God is eternally 'three betweennesses, one concord'. The work of the triune God of 'betweenness' in redemption is of secondary concern to him. This does not reflect a weakness in Miyahira's work per se but merely reflects the agenda of this particular work of his. Brunner does not touch on the question of who God is in Godself in terms of 'towardness' but focuses

exclusively on ‘towardness’ in God’s redemptive actions. Torrance applies mediation to the missions of the Son and the Spirit. Curiously he refrains from doing so when it comes to the Trinitarian God in Godself. However, Torrance understands who God is eternally in terms of what God does in the revelatory and reconciliatory mediations of the Son and Spirit. By speaking of a self-mediation of God and a divinely appointed point of contact in the mutual mediation of the Son and Spirit, Torrance opens the way to making the connection between what God does with who God is.

## Conclusion

This chapter analysed Torrance’s use of ‘mediation’ in *The Christian Doctrine of God* and has shown how central the concept of mediation is to Torrance and how generous Torrance is in its use. While being more or less implicit, mediation is far from arbitrary in Torrance’s theology given his background as a quasi-TCK. Though Torrance might never have realised how unique this one aspect of his theology is,<sup>703</sup> in hindsight mediation and its two-fold representative movement follow naturally from how he grew up in a mediating third culture environment and how he lived his life mediating between the different Church traditions. Mediation serves as a rich theological concept to add to Miyahira’s ‘betweenness’ and Brunner’s ‘towardness’ in order to construct a doctrine of the Trinity, a doctrine of Christ, and a doctrine of the restored identity of believers in terms that TCKs strongly identify with.

It also raises an important question. Torrance only speaks of mediation in the context of creation and the economy of salvation. Can ‘mediation’ be used as a concept to describe the eternal relations of the Trinity as Miyahira does with ‘betweenness’ or is it confined to the economic activities of the Son and Spirit? Can ‘mediation’ be read back from God in the economy of salvation to the ontological constitution of God? Is mediation only an activity of each person or does it constitute the person in a similar way to how Miyahira argues ‘betweenness’ constitutes the person? If ‘mediation’ is a rich enough concept to apply to both the redeeming activity of God and the constitutive personal relations of the Trinity this would establish a link between what God does (Brunner’s ‘towardness’) and who God is (Miyahira’s ‘betweenness’). This will not only help apply the insights of Miyahira

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<sup>703</sup> Mediation, while making it into the title of one of Torrance’s books, nevertheless still did not earn enough recognition to make it into the index of *The Christian Doctrine of God*.

more thoroughly to the missions of the Son and the Spirit but also help apply the insights of Torrance and Brunner to the picture Miyahira paints of the eternal God. Combining the insight of these theologians will allow a TCK theology to apply the metaphors of ‘betweenness’, ‘towardness’, and ‘mediation’ as a unifying theme for a coherent vision of Christianity that covers who God is, what God does in Christ and Spirit, and who believers are meant to be.

## Chapter 15

### Torrance's Theorem

#### Introduction

Chapter fourteen concluded with the question of how to fit together 'betweenness', 'towardness', and 'mediation' for a unified theme able to permeate a doctrine of God, of Christ, and of the believer's identity in order to construct a TCK theology with liminality at its heart. While Nozomu Miyahira's divine 'betweenness'<sup>704</sup> focuses more on who God is in Godself, Thomas Torrance mediation<sup>705</sup> and Emil Brunner towardness<sup>706</sup> deal exclusively with God's acts in redemption. In order to bring these two closer together this chapter explores the relation between the economic Trinity (God in the economy of salvation) and the immanent Trinity (God in Godself) in the theology of Torrance. By looking at how Torrance skilfully places the economic Trinity into the context of the ontological Trinity, subsequent chapters will be able to more persuasively argue for the intrinsic continuity of 'betweenness' and 'mediation' as well as 'towardness'.

This chapter consists of three sections: First, it looks at how Torrance sees the relation between what God does in Jesus Christ and who God is in Godself and introduces 'Torrance's Theorem' as the key to clarifying this relation. Second, it analyses the crucial role that *ὁμοούσιος* (*homoousios*) plays for 'Torrance's Theorem'. Third, it brings the findings into conversation with Miyahira and Brunner's insights. The goal of this chapter is to lay the groundwork for speaking of God's Trinitarian relations in terms of mediation without arbitrarily projecting convenient human notions onto God.

#### The 'Evangelical' and the 'Ontological' Trinity: Two Trinities?

In order to understand Thomas Torrance's theology of the Trinity it is crucial to realize the importance of the question of the relation between the economic or evangelical Trinity (God revealed, God for us) and the immanent or ontological Trinity (God in Godself, God's eternal being) for Torrance. An encounter with a distressed soldier during Torrance's time in Italy serves to illustrate this. When

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<sup>704</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*.

<sup>705</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*.

<sup>706</sup> Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*.

serving as a stretcher bearer in 1940, Torrance was asked by the badly wounded soldier if God really was like Jesus.<sup>707</sup> The soldier in fear of death probably knew the stories of Jesus of Nazareth but God and Jesus Christ had somehow become dislodged in his mind. As a result, “it left the impression that there was a God ‘behind the back’ of Jesus himself”<sup>708</sup> or, more technically, the ontological Trinity was unlike the evangelical Trinity. How sure can we be, the soldier might have wondered, that the God we will inevitably meet in the next world is similar to the incarnate God we encounter in this world? For Torrance, this uncertainty constitutes a problem since salvation itself rests on the identity between who God is for us in the economy and who God eternally is.<sup>709</sup> We truly know God only through the incarnation of the Son and the pouring out of the Spirit in which the eternal God is really present and we are truly reconciled through God’s real self-giving and presence in the world in Word and Spirit.

Paul Molnar explains that Torrance here follows Athanasius’ methodological axiom: “It would be more godly and true to signify God from the Son and call him Father, than to name God from his works alone and call him Unoriginate.”<sup>710</sup> In other words, knowledge of God springs from knowledge of the Son and the Spirit rather than from speculation based on other sources found in creation. Therefore, ‘God the Father’ much more accurately describes God than ‘God the creator’. The *essential* relation between the Father and the Son is a much more reliable way to know God than the *causal* relation between creator and creation.

For Torrance, the Christian doctrine of God is found in the revelation of God through the incarnate Christ in the outpouring of the Spirit. Torrance writes:

[I]t is only in Christ in whom God’s self-revelation is identical with himself that we may rightly apprehend [God’s self-revelation] and really know God as he is in himself, in the oneness and differentiation of God within his own eternal Being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for what God is toward us in his historical self-manifestation to us in the Gospel as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he is revealed to be inherently and eternally in himself. It is thus in and through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit that the distinctively Christian doctrine of God in his transcendent triunity is mediated to us.”<sup>711</sup>

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<sup>707</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 12.

<sup>708</sup> Ibid.

<sup>709</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 198.

<sup>710</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 36, 69; Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 117; Athanasius, *Contra Arianos*, 1.34.

<sup>711</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 1.

Here, Torrance sets out at the very beginning of his most mature work on the doctrine of God that the mediation of the Son and the Spirit faithfully reveal who God eternally is as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The relation between the economic Trinity, God revealed to us through God's saving acts, and the ontological Trinity, God apart from God's relation to creation, is a very specific one in Torrance's theology and is marked both by an inseparability and distinction, not plain identity.<sup>712</sup>

The picture that emerges can be aptly summarized in one of Torrance's quote: "What God is toward us in the Gospel as Father, Son and Holy Spirit he is antecedently, inherently and eternally in himself."<sup>713</sup> Similar versions of the above statement appear so often in Torrance that for our purpose we will refer to this guiding principle as 'Torrance's Theorem'.<sup>714</sup> Who God is in the evangelical Trinity, God is *antecedently, inherently, and eternally* in the ontological Trinity. 'Antecedently' makes the relation between the economic Trinity and the ontological Trinity irreversible and clearly establishes the ontological Trinity as the necessary ground of any revelation. 'Inherently' declares God's revelation in the mediation of the Son and the Spirit as authentic and accurate. The Son and the Spirit are not accidentally but essentially God among us. 'Eternally' emphasises that the faithfulness God displays in the economy of salvation has its ground in the unchanging faithfulness in God's triune being and that revelation is not vulnerable to revisions. Torrance's Theorem is based on his understanding of *ὁμοούσιος* (*homoousios*, 'of one substance with'), referring to the consubstantiality of the Son and Spirit with the Father and the identity between God's being (Who God is) and God's act (What God does).<sup>715</sup> Molnar writes that "[e]verything, including the knowledge of God as well as salvation and redemption, (...) hinges on the oneness in being and agency between God and his self-revelation in Christ."<sup>716</sup> There is only one approach to God: in faith through the Son by the Holy Spirit towards the Father. This approach depends on the oneness of what God is toward us and what God is in Godself.

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<sup>712</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>713</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>714</sup> See for example: *ibid.*, 3, 30, 83, 95, 97, 99, 107, 42, 58, 72, 98, 200.

<sup>715</sup> Torrance is influenced by his Doktorvater, Karl Barth. See for example: *ibid.*, 120. Compare also: Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. II/1 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1957), 257ff.

<sup>716</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 36.

Torrance's Theorem is based on Torrance's realist theology:

[T]hrough his Word and Spirit who are of one and the same being with himself God has really communicated *himself* to us in his own eternal and indivisible Reality as God the Father Almighty (...) what God is toward us in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, he is in himself, antecedently and eternally in himself; and (...) what he imparts to us through the Spirit who sheds the love of God into our hearts, he is in himself, antecedently and eternally in himself.<sup>717</sup>

Both the Son and the Spirit are 'really' God because they are of one and the same being with God. The eternal God is thus truly mediated to us through the incarnation of the Son and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. In the Son, God gives nothing less than Godself to us and in the Spirit God imparts nothing less than Godself to us so that through the Son's and Spirit's mediation creatures truly know who God is and can truly participate in the divine communion of the life of the Trinity.<sup>718</sup> Ultimately, Torrance's Theorem states that God's *self-revelation* as Father, Son and Holy Spirit really is also a *self-revelation* of the eternal Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

However, Torrance's Theorem must also be understood in the light of God's transcendent freedom which rules out any logically necessary relationship between the economic and the ontological Trinity.<sup>719</sup> Molnar stresses the point that "God's eternal being as Father, Son and Spirit is not in any way *constituted* or *determined* by his relations to others."<sup>720</sup> While what God is toward us he is inherently and eternally in Godself, he is also *antecedently* in Godself. The irreversible relation between the ontological Trinity and the economic Trinity clearly introduces a distinction between the two which establishes the former as the ground of the latter and the latter as following the former. Torrance writes:

We cannot think of the ontological Trinity as if it were constituted by or dependent on the economic Trinity, but must rather think of the economic Trinity as the freely predetermined manifestation in the history of salvation of the eternal Trinity (...). Hence when we rightly speak of the oneness between the ontological Trinity and the economic Trinity, we may not speak of that oneness without distinguishing and delimiting it from the ontological Trinity—there are in any case (...) elements in the incarnate economy such as the time pattern of human life in this world which we may not read back into the eternal Life of God. On the other hand, the fact that the

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<sup>717</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 3. Italics in the original.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>719</sup> This is where Torrance differs from Rahner's Rule. While Torrance agrees with Rahner that the economic Trinity must always be the starting point for any statement about the ontological Trinity he disagrees with him about the possibility of thinking about our relations with God as mutually conditioning. For Torrance's appreciation and criticism of Rahner's Rule see: "Toward Ecumenical Consensus on the Trinity," in *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994).

<sup>720</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity*, 42.



ontological Trinity has ontological priority over the economic Trinity, does not preclude us from saying that the ontological Trinity is essentially and intrinsically evangelical, for it is precisely the ontological Trinity that God has made known to us in his self-giving and self-revealing as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (...).<sup>721</sup>

Thus while in faith the economic Trinity comes epistemologically before the ontological Trinity, the ontological Trinity always has ontological priority over the economic Trinity and constitutes its ontological ground. The evangelical Trinity does not follow necessarily but only freely from the ontological Trinity and God's relation to the world does not constitute who God is in God's very being. This, however, does not mean that the two are separate entities. Neither the evangelical Trinity nor the ontological Trinity can be collapsed into each other and the two "must be clearly distinguished" but simultaneously "are not to be separated."<sup>722</sup>

Collapsing the evangelical Trinity into the ontological Trinity results in the divinization of acts of creation and incarnation making these necessary eternal properties of God. Similarly, collapsing the ontological Trinity into the evangelical Trinity results in the temporalization of the eternal God only enabling God to become God through creation and incarnation.<sup>723</sup> While acknowledging that God is essentially and inherently evangelical as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Torrance avoids the two errors of simplistic identity by making the ontological Trinity prior to the evangelical Trinity and by insisting that God's revelation is based on God's freedom, not necessity. For him, God's self-mediation can neither be logically necessary nor completely arbitrary but is free and nevertheless reflects who God eternally and inherently is. God loves in freedom and "[i]f he were not Love in his innermost Being, his love toward us in Christ and the Holy Spirit would be ontologically groundless."<sup>724</sup> The external relations of God truly reflect and reveal who God is in God's internal relations, but do not dictate what God ought to be in the economy.

What, then, about creation, incarnation, and Pentecost? According to Torrance, these are all "new events" even for God.<sup>725</sup> For example, while God has always been Father, God has not always been creator. In creation God has done something new,

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<sup>721</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 108-09.

<sup>722</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>723</sup> Fred Sanders, "Entangled in the Trinity: Economic and Immanent Trinity in Recent Theology," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 40, no. 3 (2001); Randal Rauser, "Rahner's Rule: An Emperor without Clothes?," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7, no. 1 (2005).

<sup>724</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 5.

<sup>725</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-09.

but not in disconnection with whom God is.<sup>726</sup> Furthermore, while God is eternally Son, God was not always incarnate and so the incarnation was an absolutely new event in the life of God.<sup>727</sup> The same must be said of the outpouring of the Spirit. Importantly, however, Torrance emphasises that even in these new events “God did not change but remained and continues to remain ever one and the same, (...) for God revealed himself as completely free to bring new ideas and realities into existence without contradicting himself.”<sup>728</sup> Thus Torrance’s Theorem remains true despite the distinction between the economy and the ontological Trinity: What God is for us in the economy, God is antecedently, inherently and eternally in Godself even when God performs completely new actions. While incarnation and Pentecost are not eternal events, the incarnation of the Son and the pouring out of the Spirit then, far from obscuring God through novel, arbitrary acts, faithfully reveal who God eternally is.

For Torrance, this primarily refers to God’s love as he writes that “[God] loves us with the very Love which he is.”<sup>729</sup> The nature of God’s being is love and Torrance’s Theorem describes how God has committed his very being to humanity in unconditional love. Therefore, Torrance can reformulate his theorem to state that “[w]hat God is toward us in his immense love and infinite kindness (...) he is [antecedently,] inherently and always was in himself.”<sup>730</sup> Nothing can separate creation from the love of God because God has given nothing less than God’s own being in the economy.

Torrance’s Theorem shows his strong emphasises on the continuity and close proximity between who God is for us in God’s revelation as Father, Son and Spirit and who God eternally is without slipping into crude identifications. Any attempt to argue that God’s revelation is less than a *self*-mediation in which God is personally and really present threatens Torrance’s soteriology which takes place through union with the Son and in the Spirit. Importantly, Torrance’s Theorem makes possible the argument that, while maintaining a distinction between the economic and ontological Trinity, there is continuity and coherence in the way God presents Godself in the mutual mediation of Son and Spirit. This is thus a first step in establishing mediation

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<sup>726</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>727</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>728</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>729</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>730</sup> Ibid., 79.

as a concept belonging antecedently, inherently and eternally to God's being.

### **'*Homoousios*': Linchpin of Torrance's Theology**

One of the unique aspects of Torrance's theology is his creative use of the concept of ὁμοούσιος (*homoousios*, 'of one substance with') which played such a crucial role in the development of the Nicene Creed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>731</sup> *Homoousios* for Torrance signifies the "oneness in being and act of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."<sup>732</sup> It is a hermeneutical principle with far-reaching soteriological consequences. Torrance's Theorem rests on the premise that the Son and the Spirit are of one being with God the Father and that they can therefore really reveal who God inherently and eternally is in Godself. Torrance famously declared that *homoousios* is "the ontological and epistemological lynchpin of Christian theology"<sup>733</sup> without which various aspects of Christian theology would fall apart, especially Torrance's Theorem.

Torrance applies ὁμοούσιος to hold together five different theological aspects: 1. The Son and the Father; 2. The Spirit and the Father; 3. The economic Trinity and the ontological Trinity; 4. The one common being of the eternal Father, Son and Spirit; 5. The act and being of God. This section looks at these aspects in turn. It is important to keep in mind that *homoousios* here does not mean a simple identity but a nuanced distinction as well as identity.<sup>734</sup>

First, *homoousios* applies to the relation between the Father and the Son to safeguard the unqualified, underived deity of the Son. It gives expression to "the unbroken oneness in Being and Act between Jesus Christ (...) and God the Father."<sup>735</sup> It follows that what Christ says and does, in effect who Christ is, truly reveals God.<sup>736</sup> Additionally, Christ is also of one nature (*homoousios*) with humanity and thus the incarnate Son constitutes a bridge<sup>737</sup> firmly anchored in both the eternal God as well as created humanity. Christ presents an uninterrupted continuity between the human expression of God in the incarnation and the very being of God in eternity.

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<sup>731</sup> For a detailed analysis of the 4th century history of the dispute concerning the importance of the '*homousios*' see: Smith, "The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers."

<sup>732</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 54.

<sup>733</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 95.

<sup>734</sup> *Ibid.*, 30, 81, 97, 125, 29.

<sup>735</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>736</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 56-58.

<sup>737</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 77.

In Christ, due to *homoousios*, the revealer and the revealed are one and the same.<sup>738</sup> The mediator Son then while mediating between God and creatures is not a created intermediate being or some sort of demi-god.<sup>739</sup> In other words, there is a unity and continuity in being, knowledge, and love<sup>740</sup> between the Father and the Son.<sup>741</sup> Through unity of being, believers know that in Christ God is truly among us; Through unity of knowledge believers know that Christ truly reveals the intentions of God the Father; Through unity of love believers know that the Father's unconditional love for the incarnate Son can be humanity's through Christ. The eternal love of the Father and Son is extended through Christ to creation.

Torrance's Theorem as it applies to the Son can be restated as follows: 'What God is towards us in Christ, God is antecedently, inherently and eternal in Godself.' In the incarnation, there is present nothing less but the very being of God. In the mediation of the Son, believers get a glimpse of who God really is.

Second, *homoousios* applies to the Spirit: The Spirit is of one and the same being with God the Father<sup>742</sup> and thus what God imparts to believers in the Spirit is nothing less than God's true self.<sup>743</sup> Just as in the Son the revealer and the revealed coincide, so in the Spirit the gift is the giver and the giver is the gift.<sup>744</sup> The Spirit, God within us, is not a created intermediary but very God of very God. In the unique mediation of the Spirit nothing less but the very being of God is the mediator and the mediated.

*Homoousios* in the case of the Spirit, like that of the Son, is necessary for salvation. Unless the Spirit was of one being with the Father and the Son, the revelation of God through the Son would not be actualised and fulfilled within the believer. However, Torrance argues that *homoousios* applies to the Spirit differently.<sup>745</sup> The Spirit did not become incarnate and is not consubstantial with humanity. We do not know the Spirit in his own distinctive person as we know the

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<sup>738</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>739</sup> Ibid., 18, 92.

<sup>740</sup> Molnar notes that we can see here the influence of Torrance's teacher Hugh Ross Mackintosh who emphasized the exclusive relationship of knowing between Father and Son expressed in Matthew 11:27. Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 4-5.

<sup>741</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 57-59.

<sup>742</sup> Ibid., 96-97. While not explicitly expressed so in the Niceno-Cosmopolitan Creed, Torrance argues that the Council of Constantinople intended the section on the Holy Spirit to mean exactly that: The Spirit is of one and the same being with the Father and the Son.

<sup>743</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>744</sup> Ibid., 21, 63.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid., 100-01.

incarnate Son. The Son remains the only epistemological centre concerning knowledge of God. However, the Spirit is “the immediate presence and power of God’s revelation to us”<sup>746</sup> and thus it is *in* the Spirit that we have access to God the Father *through* the Son. For Torrance, through the Spirit believers commune with God because the Spirit unites us to the Christ who is the very Son of the Father.

*Homoousios* applied to the Spirit is of great significance. While the Son’s mediatorship is intrinsically connected with the incarnation and thus necessarily raises the question of whether God takes on a mediatorial role only in the economy of salvation (meaning that similar to the act of creation, the act of mediation is new even to God) or whether this points to an eternal mediatorial dimension freely expressed historically in the incarnation of the Son. For Torrance, it is crucial that *homoousios* in relation to the Son is placed alongside *homoousios* applied to the Spirit because *homoousios* in the context of the Spirit prevents the reading back into God of creaturely and material aspects.<sup>747</sup> The Spirit’s *homoousios* keeps rampant speculations based on Christ’s incarnation in check.<sup>748</sup> The Spirit, who is “imageless”<sup>749</sup> and yet also very God of very God, prevents any mythical projection onto God of human characteristics. The naïve reading back into God of ‘mediation’ through the incarnation of the Son is kept in check through the Spirit’s *homoousios*.<sup>750</sup> Mediation cannot be reduced to simply what God does in the incarnation if the Spirit must also be understood as performing a mediatorial role. When stripped of material and creaturely aspects of the incarnate mediation of Christ, we are still left with a solid theme of mediation in the Spirit and this presents a strong case for reading mediation back into God as something that God truly is and does in the eternal Trinitarian movements of love.

Concerning the *homoousios* applied to the Spirit, Torrance’s theorem can be restated as follows: ‘What God is toward us in the Spirit, God is antecedently, inherently and eternally in Godself.’ The communion of the Spirit which makes present and imparts into us nothing less but the very being of God is the very same

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<sup>746</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>747</sup> Ibid., 101, 07, 58.

<sup>748</sup> E.g. because the Spirit is also of one being with God, we cannot argue that Christ’s two eyes and one nose are an essential quality of God.

<sup>749</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 158-59.

<sup>750</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 48-49.

communion between the Father and the Son that the Spirit eternally is.<sup>751</sup>

Additionally, the mediator that God is toward us in the Spirit has an eternal dimension.

Third, Torrance applies *homoousios* to the evangelical and ontological Trinity.<sup>752</sup> Applying the *homoousios* to the whole Trinity is a stretch but nevertheless follows from the above two points. The incarnate Son is of one and the same being as the eternal God the Father and the poured out Spirit is of one and the same being as the eternal God the Father. Thus the tripersonal God of Father, Son, and Spirit (the evangelical Trinity) revealed in that Spirit through that Son cannot be anything less but the very tripersonal God of Father, Son, and Spirit that God is eternally (the ontological Trinity).<sup>753</sup> Torrance writes that “[w]hat the ὁμοούσιος did was to give decisive expression to the truth that God’s revelation of himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the incarnate economy of salvation was grounded in and derived from God as he is in [his] own eternal Being and Nature” and enables believers to know Godself, “in some real measure, as he is in the inner relations of his eternal Being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”<sup>754</sup> For Torrance what counts is that something about God that is inherently and eternally true can be known through the Son and Spirit. This means that not only the content of what God reveals corresponds to whom God is (namely God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), but also the manner in which God reveals Godself (namely by way of mediation from the Father through the Son and the Spirit) expresses something about who God antecedently, inherently, and eternally is. In this sense, who God is as God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation, God is antecedently, inherently, and eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Fourth, Torrance applies *homoousios* to the eternal tripersonal being of God and the internal personal relations. Here *homoousios* describes both the eternal distinctions between the Father, Son, and Spirit and also the mutual interpenetration of one another in the one numerically (not specifically) identical being of the Trinity.<sup>755</sup> Two aspects are significant in Torrance’s treatment of God’s tripersonal

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<sup>751</sup> Torrance, referencing Augustine, even speaks of the Spirit as a 'kind of consubstantial communion' of the Father and Son. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 30.

<sup>752</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 55.

<sup>753</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 130.

<sup>754</sup> *Ibid.*, 80-81.

<sup>755</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

being: First, God's being (*ousia*) must be understood in the light of the person-constituting relations ('onto-relations'<sup>756</sup>): God's one being is intensely personal, dynamic, and relational.<sup>757</sup> Second, each of the three persons, who are always defined in their relation to the other two persons, must be understood in the light of this one being of God as inherently altruistic: they share "being for others" and are "for one another."<sup>758</sup> For Torrance, the three persons are "inseparably interrelated in being and act through a mutual indwelling and a mutual movement toward one another in the homoousial Communion of the Holy Trinity which they constitute."<sup>759</sup> *Homoousios* here describes the unique divine communion the three persons have due to their sharing of the one being of God. While being distinct as persons, the three are identical in being.

Since the three persons share the numerically identical being of God, their distinctiveness emerges out of the interrelations between them. Torrance calls this "the onto-relational concept of the divine Persons."<sup>760</sup> These ontic relations between the persons belong to what the persons are (substantive relations).<sup>761</sup> Each person is who the persons is only as the third among and for two other persons: "Each person is intrinsically who he is for the other two."<sup>762</sup> Molnar observes that these ontic relations constitute the indivisible unity of the Trinity meaning that the Godhead is complete not in the Father alone but also in the Son and the Spirit.<sup>763</sup> As such, the being of God is a Being-in-Communion and what God does is communion-constituting.<sup>764</sup>

*Homoousios* in the context of the Godhead then lets us speak of the divine persons in terms of their identity with each other (each person absolutely considered is identical with both the other persons) and their distinctiveness (each person relatively considered is neither of the other two persons). In other words, each person is both this and that person as well as neither this nor that person.

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<sup>756</sup> Ibid., 102-03, 29, 33, 57, 63, 68, 73, 74, 97.

<sup>757</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>758</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>759</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>760</sup> Ibid., 102; Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 59-61.

<sup>761</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 156-57. Torrance here follows Gregory of Nazianzen who argued for persons as relations that subsist eternally beyond time, beyond, origin, and beyond causality. For Torrance Persons are imageless relations.

<sup>762</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>763</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 61.

<sup>764</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 124.

Finally, for Torrance *homoousios* is related to the oneness of God's being and act.<sup>765</sup> Referencing Karl Barth, Torrance argues that God's being is "his being-in-his-act" and his act is "his act-in-being"<sup>766</sup> holding who God is closely together with what God does. Molnar even suggests that the concept of *homoousios* boils down to "the oneness in being and act of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."<sup>767</sup> Reflecting this identity, Torrance's Theorem can be restated as follows: 'What God *does* for us God *is* antecedently, inherently, and eternally.'<sup>768</sup>

The 'act of God' must be understood as the outgoing mediating salvific movement of God in the Son and the Spirit which invites believers into the communion that God is in Godself.<sup>769</sup> However, if God's being (*ousia*) is the personal, dynamic, relational being<sup>770</sup> that Torrance argues for then there must be a second aspect besides the immanent act of God in history, namely that of the eternal act of the three persons in the above mentioned "mutual movement toward and for one another."<sup>771</sup> God's act has two dimensions. On the one hand, it refers to the mediating movements of God in salvation history. God's act is an outgoing movement in which, through Son and in Spirit, God gives Godself to creation. This is a movement *toward* and *for* another, echoing Brunner's God-toward-humanity. On the other hand, to this outgoing movement there corresponds an eternal act of God: a "movement of love"<sup>772</sup> of the three persons which constitute the one personal, dynamic, and relational being of God. So, who God is in God's mediating movements in the Son and the Spirit toward and for us, God antecedently, inherently, and eternally is in God's movements of love. Indeed, Torrance argues:

The inherent unity of Being and Act in God forces upon us an understanding of God in which movement belongs to his eternal Being. If God is how he is in his activity to us through the Son and in the Spirit, then it belongs to the essential Nature of his eternal Being to move and energise and act.<sup>773</sup>

The mediatorial act belongs to the eternal moving act of God's being. In fact,

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<sup>765</sup> Essentially, *homoousios* in terms of identity of being and act is only a restatement of the first four points made above but from the perspective of being and actions.

<sup>766</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 120.

<sup>767</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 54.

<sup>768</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 129.

<sup>769</sup> *Ibid.*, 162-67.

<sup>770</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>771</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>772</sup> *Ibid.*, 164-65.

<sup>773</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.



Torrance goes as far as to say that God's being is an eternal movement.<sup>774</sup> This correspondence between historical mediating movement and eternal movement merits further analysis.

## Conclusion

Out of this analysis of how Torrance understands the connection between the mediation of the Son and the Spirit in the economy and who God is in Godself four important elements emerge.

First, Torrance insists that in the mediation of the Son and the Spirit nothing less than Godself is present. God determined to be discerned in God's revelation through the Son and in the Spirit who are both of one and the same substance as God the Father. Similarly, Brunner writes "God is the God-towards-humanity because and only because he wills to be discerned in his Word"<sup>775</sup> and names this divine towardness a "Selbstmitteilung".<sup>776</sup> God gives Godself.

Second, Torrance argues that the divine movement toward and for others in creation can be found antecedently, eternally, and inherently in the Trinitarian movements of love toward and for the other persons of the Trinity. Brunner's God-toward-humanity thus springs from the eternal towardness of the Trinity and the 'betweenness' of the incarnate Christ between God and humanity similarly has its ground in the divine 'betweenness' of the Son between the Father and the Spirit.

Third, the numerically identical being of God of the homoousial Father, Son, and the Spirit is differentiated through 'onto-relations'. The relations between the persons constitute the very person.<sup>777</sup> This corresponds to Miyahira's argument that 'persons' are in fact divine 'betweennesses' who are constituted by their relation to the other two.<sup>778</sup> For Torrance, the personal, dynamic, and relational being of God gives rise to the three persons as much as the movement of love of the three persons gives rise to the personal dynamic, and relational being of God. Viewed through the implications of Torrance's Theorem, the onto-relational understanding of persons links the constitutive relations of the persons with the eternal tripersonal movement of love of the being of God.

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<sup>774</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>775</sup> Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, 53.

<sup>776</sup> Ibid., 44-45.

<sup>777</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 102-03.

<sup>778</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 158.

Finally, in connection with this movement of love by God, Torrance speaks of a mirrored movement of love by humanity. Torrance writes that “the movement of Love eternally hidden in God has been revealed to us, and a corresponding movement of love has been generated in us toward the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>779</sup> God revealed Godself to be the God-toward-humanity and evokes a response within humanity of a movement of discovery wherein humanity finds itself as ‘Humanity-from-God’ in a movement in the Spirit, through the Son, back to the Father. The movement of redemption is humanity-back-to-God.

Thus in looking at how Torrance understands the relation between the evangelical Trinity and the ontological Trinity a significant connection arises among, first, the movement of mutual mediation of Son and Spirit who reveal and reconcile believers to God, second, the eternal movement of love which cannot be anything else but the onto-relations of the three divine persons in their movement towards and for one another, and, third, the corresponding redemptive movement from humanity back to God in which humanity can reclaim its true identity as creatures.<sup>780</sup> However, while using ‘mediation’ so frequently to speak of the salvific movement of God in history, Torrance remains silent when it comes to any references of a corresponding ‘mediation’ that can be found antecedently, inherently, and eternally within God as Torrance’s Theorem would suggest. Taking seriously Torrance Theorem, the question thus emerges: Can we speak of the Father, Son and Spirit in terms of eternal communion constituting self-mediators who are each unique in their ‘betweenness’ (à la Miyahira) and have a dynamic ‘towards and for other’-ness (à la Torrance) that serves as the ground for the identity-bestowing God-toward-humanity (à la Brunner)?

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<sup>779</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 165.

<sup>780</sup> Ibid., 163-65.

## Chapter 16

### Toward a Liminal Trinity

#### Introduction

Chapters fourteen and fifteen looked at the contours of Torrance's Trinitarian theology rooted in the mutual mediation of the Son and Spirit and his close association of what God does and who God is. This chapter weaves the various theological building blocks together towards a doctrine of the Trinity from the perspective of TCKs. Using Thomas Torrance's 'mediation' and Nozomu Miyahira's 'betweenness' as key concepts this chapter seeks to formulate a doctrine of the Trinity expressed in terms of liminality, non-place, and liquidity.

Even though Torrance remains silent concerning mediation in the eternal life of the Trinity, mediation plays an undeniable role in the economy of salvation. However, Torrance's realist theology holds together closely the evangelical Trinity (and with it the economic mediation of the Son and the Spirit) and the corresponding eternal Trinitarian life of God (which Torrance names the eternal movement of love). This chapter makes the case that mediation lies at the centre of the eternal movement of love within God, and shows that the doctrine of the Trinity can be conceived with mediation at its very heart. Three points are of importance in Torrance's mutual mediation: First, in light of *homoousios*, God personally mediates reconciliation and revelation between divine things and creaturely things in the Son and the Spirit. The mediators are not intermediary beings but 'very God of very God,' 'of one being with the Father.'<sup>781</sup> The medium is thus divine and personal. Second, a central characteristic of Torrance's mediation is the dynamic two-way movement executed by the mediating person who stands and negotiates between two parties, i.e. God and creation.<sup>782</sup> Mediation is a dynamic 'betweenness'. Third, the mediating two-way movement of the Son and of the Spirit are inseparable due to the one coactivity of the triune God.<sup>783</sup> All divine operations are from the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit. The mediatorial work of the Son is not independent of the mediation of the Spirit. In short, "Calvary and Pentecost (...) may not be separated from one

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<sup>781</sup> Ibid., 3, 18.

<sup>782</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>783</sup> Ibid., 196-97.

another.”<sup>784</sup> This mutuality opens the way to argue for mediation not only in the economy but between the divine persons themselves.

With the above points in mind, the first half of this chapter looks at mediation in three contexts: First, in terms of the salvific work of the Son and Spirit in reconciliation and revelation; Second, in terms of the historical mission of the Son and the Spirit from the Father; Third, in terms of the eternal generations of the Son and the Spirit from the Father. The second half of this chapter then proceeds to formulate a doctrine of the mediating Trinity and, finally, presents a TCK doctrine of the Trinity with liminality at its centre.

### **Mutual Mediation in Reconciliation and Revelation**

Elmer Colyer summarizes Torrance’s mutual mediation in the following two statements: on the one hand, “[t]he coming of the Spirit at Pentecost is mediated by Jesus Christ,” on the other hand, “[t]he coming of the Holy Spirit mediates Jesus Christ to us.”<sup>785</sup> Torrance describes Christ’s mediation in terms of the mediation of revelation and the mediation of reconciliation. In both cases Christ plays the dual role of faithfully speaking and faithfully hearing.<sup>786</sup> The mediation of the Spirit by the Son belongs inseparably to the mediation of revelation and reconciliation: In the incarnation and ascension, the Son mediates the pouring out of the Spirit through the assumed humanity reconciled to God. In fact, the gracious pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost only participates in the natural reception of the Spirit in the incarnation of the Son to whom the Spirit eternally belongs. In the incarnate mediating person of Christ, the Son plays the dual role of both natural giving what is his own and faithful receiving the Spirit in the assumed humanity in order to make possible the unconditional pouring out of the Spirit to all creatures and with it the pouring out of God’s love into our hearts.<sup>787</sup>

The second part of Colyer’s summary describes how the Spirit steps in between the incarnate Christ and believers to play the dual mediating role of revealing Christ as the Son of God to the believer on the one hand and uniting the

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<sup>784</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>785</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 221, 24.

<sup>786</sup> Ibid., 65-69; Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 17, 41.

<sup>787</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 148. Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 223-24.

believer to the incarnate Son on the other hand. The Spirit mediates between God and humanity, faithfully showing what God has accomplished in Christ and enabling believers to faithfully recognize that reality.<sup>788</sup>

On the surface, the mediation of the Spirit seems to be a secondary step which merely completes the mediation of the Son and ties up loose ends after Christ's ascension. However, Torrance's *mutual* mediation of Son and Spirit argues for a more intricate relation between Son and Spirit in the economy. The mediation of the Son itself is mediated by the Spirit. Just as the pouring out of the Spirit (and thus the historical mission of the Spirit) results from the mediation of the Son, so the birth, life, death, and resurrection (and thus the historical mission of the Son) occurs through the mediation of the Spirit. The Son is conceived in time by the Spirit, is baptised with the Spirit, lives anointed with the Spirit, offers himself to the Father in atoning sacrifice through the Spirit, and rises again by the power of the Spirit.<sup>789</sup> In other words, due to the mutuality of the two mediations, Torrance hints at the possibility of speaking not only of the salvific work of the Son and Spirit in terms of mediation but also of the historical missions of the Son and the Spirit themselves as mutually mediated by the Son and the Spirit: God's outward movement of Love can be described in terms of mediation.

### **Mutual Mediation in the Historical Missions**

Aspects that Torrance's concept of mutual mediation leaves unsaid can now be developed in order to formulate a unique take on the doctrine of the Trinity. If the historical missions of the Son and the Spirit themselves reflect mediation then the persons themselves can be spoken of as being inherently, antecedently, and eternally mediators. Missions and mediation would go beyond the idea of the persons merely performing mediatorial roles in the economy of salvation as an ad hoc response to a fallen world. This argument constitutes the next step towards making the case for eternal mediations between the persons in the Trinity.

The New Testament suggests<sup>790</sup> and the Nicene Creed of A.D. 381 affirms<sup>791</sup> the notion that the generation of the Son in time involves the mediation of the Spirit.

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<sup>788</sup> *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 224-33.

<sup>789</sup> *Ibid.*, 224; Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 62.

<sup>790</sup> Matthew 1.20; Luke 1.35.

<sup>791</sup> '(...) was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary.'

Applying Torrance's language of personal mediation, in the incarnation of the Son the Spirit mediates between the Father who sends the Son and the Son who is sent from the Father in the Spirit. There is thus a Father-toward-Son movement of self-giving taking place in the Spirit who mediates the being of the Father to the Son. Correspondingly, there is a Son-toward-Father movement of trust and dependence in the Spirit's mediation.<sup>792</sup> Part of the Spirit's role is the two-fold mediating movement not only of reconciliation or revelation but of self-giving and self-offering where, on the one hand, the Father through the Spirit gives himself to the Son and exalts the Son, and, on the other hand, the Son through the Spirit gives himself to the Father and glorifies the Father.

The historical mission of the Son can be meaningfully stated using Torrance's language of the personal two-way mediation of the Spirit. The incarnation takes place through the mediatorial work of the Spirit through whom the Father gives the Son and in whom the Son glorifies the Father. In fact, Torrance's recurring statements about the communion of the Spirit being the very communion between the Father and the Son almost necessarily imply a mediatorial Spirit-person between the Father and the Son.<sup>793</sup> Torrance writes that "the Holy Spirit himself is to be thought of as the ever-living two-way Communion between the Father and the Son."<sup>794</sup> There is thus an inherent connection between the mediation of the Spirit and Torrance's concept of the communion of the Spirit. The Spirit mediates between Father and Son in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Naturally, a similar case for the mediation of the Spirit by the Son in the historical pouring out of the Spirit can be made. For example, the Son sends the Spirit who proceeds from the Father<sup>795</sup> and the Spirit is poured out generously from God the Father through Christ the saviour.<sup>796</sup> As per Torrance's two way movement of mediation, on the one hand, the Spirit is poured out from the Father through the mediation of the Son, and, on the other hand, the Spirit bears silent witness through the Son of the Father. In Torrance's words, the "[the Spirit] lights up for us the Face of God in the Face of Jesus Christ."<sup>797</sup> The two-fold movement of Father-toward-

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<sup>792</sup> Heb. 9.14.

<sup>793</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 59-70, 125-28.

<sup>794</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>795</sup> John 15.26.

<sup>796</sup> Titus 3.6.

<sup>797</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 151.

Spirit and Spirit-toward-Father takes place through the mediation of the Son. Through Christ, God Father gives himself in the Spirit to believers and, correspondingly, in the Spirit believers have access through Christ to the Father. While Torrance does not speak of ‘the communion of the Son’ between the Father and the Spirit, this dimension of the mediation by the Son finds its expression in the outgoing movement of God to creation “*from the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit*”<sup>798</sup> and the corresponding returning movement of believer “by the Spirit through the Son to the Father.”<sup>799</sup> The Son mediates between the Father and the Spirit in the outgoing movement of love and self-giving as well as in the corresponding movement in which the Spirit through the Son takes believers back to their Father. There is thus a ‘communion of the Son’ not unlike the ‘communion of the Spirit’ through which the Father’s out pouring movement and the Spirit’s returning and movement flows.

This formulation of the missions of the Son and Spirit in terms of the mutual mediation reflects a significant shift of the argument from the divine mediation between God and creation (the end result of the mutual mediation of Son and Spirit) to mediation between divine persons (which constitute the underlying ground and grammar of God’s salvific work of inviting creation back into communion with its Creator). Both the outgoing movements of God in the historical missions can be stated in terms of personal, mutual, two-way mediation by the Son and the Spirit. Torrance’s unique ‘mutuality’ of the Son’s and Spirit’s mediation adds a further layer of implicit mediation in the economy between divine persons themselves to the already explicit mediation of reconciliation and revelation between God and creation.

In the context of the realist theology of Torrance, where God really and truly gives nothing less than Godself, this does not come as a surprise. While taking place in time and space and being open to the inclusion of humanity, redemption as an outgoing two-way movement of God’s love does not rest on a fragile and tentative God-human relation dependent on the unlikely obedient acceptance of God by sinful humanity. Instead the mediation of revelation and reconciliation is anchored securely and validated unconditionally in the self-giving movement and corresponding

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<sup>798</sup> Ibid.

<sup>799</sup> Ephesians 2.18. Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity : In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2004), 68. See also: *ibid.*, 73-85.

returning movement through the mediation *between* the divine persons themselves. By expanding Torrance's concept of mediation to include the generation of the Son in time from the Father through the Spirit (and the corresponding mediating movement of the self-giving of the Son through the Spirit to the Father) and the pouring out of the Spirit in creation from the Father through the Son (and the corresponding mediating movement of glorification of the Father through the Son by the Spirit) the salvific mediatorial work of the Son and the Spirit between God and humanity is grounded in the unfailing mutual mediation of the Son between the Father and the Spirit on the one hand and of the Spirit between the Father and the Son on the other hand. The mediation offered to humanity in the Son and the Spirit is a participation in the very mediation that exists between the divine persons.

### **Mediation in the Divine Movement of Love**

Having established mediation as a valid concept between the divine persons in the historical missions themselves, the next step involves reading back mediation into the very life of God. This establishes mediation as a key concept when speaking of who God is not only for us but antecedently, eternally, and inherently as per Torrance's Theorem. Torrance's concept of divine movement serves to make the case that the historical missions reflect the eternal onto-relations that constitute the persons.

Torrance conceives of God's being as a dynamic "being-in-movement."<sup>800</sup> Movement in God here has two aspects. First, Torrance speaks of God's movement in terms of God's mediating movement of self-revelation and self-giving.<sup>801</sup> This constitutes God's 'outgoing movement.' Secondly, Torrance speaks of God's movement in God's very being.<sup>802</sup> This constitutes God's 'eternal movement of love' and to Torrance this means the same as God's fellowship of love<sup>803</sup> or God's communion of love.<sup>804</sup>

The Son's and Spirit's two-fold mediating movements characterize God's outward movement.<sup>805</sup> Torrance also emphasizes that these two movements are in

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<sup>800</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 149.

<sup>801</sup> Ibid., 1, 8, 18, 38, 41, 42, 43, 69, 78, 82, 91, 99, 106, 08, 16, 46, 49, 50, 63, 209, 10, 33.

<sup>802</sup> Ibid., 5, 133, 39, 46, 49, 63, 64, 65, 71, 72, 209, 19, 48, 52.

<sup>803</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>804</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>805</sup> Ibid., 146, 49.



fact one divine outgoing movement of overflowing love, reemphasising the unity of God's operations and the inseparability of the Son and the Spirit.<sup>806</sup> The outgoing movement of God's redemption corresponds to and truly reveals "the movement of Love eternally hidden in God."<sup>807</sup> The outgoing movement and the eternal movement reflect the close relation between economic Trinity and the ontological Trinity in Torrance's Theorem: The outgoing movement is grounded in the eternal movement of God's being and both movements really are one and the same authentic movement of God.<sup>808</sup> If we understand the outgoing movement of God, to which there is a corresponding eternal movement of love within God, to mean the mutual mediation of the Son and the Spirit in the economy, then there must be a corresponding eternal mutual mediation of Son and Spirit within the eternal being of God. This eternal mediation finds expression in the fellowship and communion of love that God is.

Torrance strongly argues against any separation between an unknowable transcendent God (the eternal movement of love) and God's uncreated energies of self-revelation (the outgoing movement of love) since this would obstruct any real access to knowing God in Godself and in God's internal relations.<sup>809</sup> Instead, relying on his concept of *homoousios*, Torrance argues for the possibility of "read[ing] back the interrelations between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation unto the eternal relations immanent in the one Being of God."<sup>810</sup> The historical missions (outgoing movement) give us access to knowing something meaningful about the eternal processions (eternal movement). While we cannot know what the ineffable relations such as 'generation' and 'procession' mean when applied to God, Torrance's realist theology nevertheless insists that we can know something valid about them, e.g. through the incarnation, Jesus's teachings about the Father and the Spirit, the breathing out of the Spirit on the disciples, and the pouring out of the Spirit upon the church after the ascension.<sup>811</sup> And thus Torrance writes in the context of the procession of the Spirit that "it is on the oneness of the historical mission of the Spirit from the incarnate Son with the eternal outgoing of the Spirit

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<sup>806</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>807</sup> Ibid., 164-65.

<sup>808</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>809</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>810</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>811</sup> Ibid., 193. Torrance distinguishes between comprehension (impossible) and apprehension (possible) of God. See: *ibid.*, 26.

from the Father that the truth of the Gospel is ultimately grounded.”<sup>812</sup> The same should apply to the oneness of the generation in time and the eternal generation of the Son as Torrance remarks that the incarnation of the Son tells us something about who the Son really is.<sup>813</sup>

Based on the oneness of the historical missions (outgoing movement) and the eternal relations (eternal movement), the eternal divine interpersonal onto-relations can thus be described in terms of personal, two-way mutual mediations. The Son is eternally begotten from the Father through the mediation of the Spirit and the Spirit is eternally breathed out and poured out through the mediation of the Son. These two eternal movements of mutual mediation are inseparable. Correspondingly, there is an eternal returning movement of love from the Spirit to the Father through the Son and an eternal movement of love from the Son to the Father through the Spirit. Otherness in God is conceived through the personal mediation that distinguishes as well as unites in moving between the two others. It makes sense to speak of mediation within God if, as Torrance argues, God is truly ‘being-for-others’ not only towards creation but antecedently, inherently, and eternally within Godself.

### **The Father as Mediator**

Having made the case for an eternal movement of mediation by the Son and the Spirit, a similar case for the eternal mediation of the Father needs to be made in order to truly make mediation a central characteristic of who God is. Through their historical missions of mutual mediation the Son and the Spirit can easily be imagined as eternal mediators. The case for a mediator Father is less clear.

Torrance has been criticised for downplaying the significance of the Father in the monarchy of the Trinity thereby portraying a less fatherly Father.<sup>814</sup> Indeed, Torrance ascribes the monarchy, the one concrete being of God, not to the person of the Father but to the whole Trinity.<sup>815</sup> However, Torrance also retains the idea that there is an order in the distinctions of the persons which gives priority to the Father.<sup>816</sup> Furthermore, while for Torrance the Father could never be the deifier of

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<sup>812</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>813</sup> Ibid., 199-200 Here Torrance is in agreement with Rahner whom he refers to; See: Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 39.

<sup>814</sup> Benjamin Dean, "Person and Being: Conversation with T.F. Torrance About the Monarchy of God," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15, no. 1 (2013).

<sup>815</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 140, 80-85.

<sup>816</sup> Ibid., 176.

the Son and the Spirit since this would introduce a damaging qualitative distinction between underived and derived deity within the Godhead, Torrance nevertheless maintains that the Father must be thought of as the principle of deity simply because the Father is the uniquely unoriginate one from whom the Son is born and from whom the Spirit proceeds.<sup>817</sup> Torrance expresses this by arguing that the Son is from the *being* of the Father (instead of the person of the Father).<sup>818</sup>

From the above the case can be made that the mutual mediation by and of Son and Spirit rests on there being an unoriginate Father amongst the two from whom the two eternally proceed. The principle of mediation is found in none other than the Father who as the principle of deity gives rise to the other two persons (and defines the other two as much as he is defined by the Son of the Father and the Spirit of the Father). The homoousial unity between the Son who sends the Spirit from the Father and the Spirit through whom the Son is born rests on none other than the being of the Father.

As both the Son and the Spirit proceed from the Father, the Father stands uniquely between the Son and the Spirit as the principle of distinction and communion. In this sense, the Father can be conceptualized as the unoriginate mediator who eternally mediates between the Son and the Spirit from whom both proceed. Through the one being of the Father from whom both Son and Spirit are, the Spirit and the Son share in each other completely and inhere in each other. In the processions, the Father mediates between Son and Spirit as the arch-mediator. The Father constitutes the creative ground that lets the others be who they are. In other words, the Father is the personal medium in which the Son and Spirit are.

Following Torrance's two-way movement of mediation, the following relations can be described: the Spirit loves the Son through the Father, and the Son loves the Spirit through the Father. This is possible precisely because both the Son and the Spirit share the one numerical divine being through their relations of origin and distinction in the Father between them.

The mediation of the Father plays a crucial role within the economy of the mutual mediation of the Son and Spirit. The Son can share the Spirit with humanity

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<sup>817</sup> Ibid., 178-80.

<sup>818</sup> Ibid., 182. It cannot be understated that the Father as principle of deity is not a monarchy of the Father as person for Torrance. The being of the Father could never be mono personal but is always already the triune being of communion of Father, Son and Spirit.

only through the Father through whom both are *homoousios* and the Spirit can give witness to the Son only through the Father through whom both are *homoousios*. In fact, the case can be made that through the mediation of the Son and the Spirit the mediator Father is revealed as the ground on which their mutual mediation stands. By being united with Christ in the Spirit believers witness the eternal Father who is between them and whom the Son and Spirit have in common.

The being of the mediator Father is God's communion-constituting being<sup>819</sup> and, eternally, this finds expression in the Father's eternal self-giving mediation between the Son and the Spirit to create an everlasting perfect communion and again in the historical economy where the Father creates communion with God's people through the mediating missions of the Son and the Spirit.

### **Communion of the Spirit and Trinitarian Mediation**

There is thus an inherent connection between communion, which Torrance argues God's being essentially is, and mediation, which describes the persons' movements for and towards others. This comes to the foreground in Torrance's repeated discussions of the 'Communion of the Spirit.'<sup>820</sup>

The communion of the Spirit seems to occupy a unique place in Torrance's theology since Torrance at times comes close to equating the Spirit with the communion-constituting being of God thus potentially giving the impression that the Spirit is the quasi-principle of unity of the Trinity.<sup>821</sup> Borrowing from Athanasius of Alexandria, Torrance describes "the *Communion* of the Holy Spirit [as] belong[ing] to the mutual relation between the Father and the Son;"<sup>822</sup> Referring to Epiphanius of Salamis, he writes that "the Spirit is to be understood in his oneness in being and coequality with the Father and the Son as being in himself the homoousial Communion of the Father and the Son with one another."<sup>823</sup> Referencing Basil the Great, Torrance remarks that "the Holy Spirit is to be thought of as the ever-living two-way Communion between the Father and the Son"<sup>824</sup> It is not by coincidence

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<sup>819</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 150-51; Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 124.

<sup>820</sup> Torrance often follows the pattern from II Corinthians 13.14: Love of the Father, grace of the Lord Jesus, and communion (or fellowship) of the Spirit. See for example: *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 2, 50-70.

<sup>821</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-70, 100, 25-28, 64-67.

<sup>822</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>823</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>824</sup> *Ibid.*

that Torrance concludes his discussion of the eternal indwelling of the Father, the Son and the Spirit with an explicit reference to the centrality of the communion of the Spirit, giving the impression that the Spirit constitutes this indwelling union of persons.<sup>825</sup> For Torrance, the Spirit is forever the principle of communion between the Father and the Son and therefore is also the person associated with the principle of union between God and the communion within the church.

This explicit reference to the Spirit as the homoousial bond between the Father and the Spirit of course relates to the mediation of the Spirit between the Father and the Son. Divine mediation means divine communion-constitution. However, does 'communion' exclusively belong to the Spirit? Given that for Torrance God's being is communion, by ascribing communion exclusively to the Spirit would that not reduce the Spirit to the homoousial nature of a binity consisting of the two persons of Father and Son and thus to a sub-personal essential quality?<sup>826</sup> What does Torrance mean when he writes that "the Holy Spirit is in himself the *enhypostatic* Love and the Communion of Love in the perichoretic relations between the Father and the Son"?<sup>827</sup>

Here Torrance's idea of looking at each person relatively as well as absolutely will help to clarify the issue of the communion of the Spirit. Each of the three persons exhibit two dimensions. The Father, relatively, is the Father in relation to the Son and the Spirit. The Father, absolutely, is also the one God, the one "eternal self-grounded personal Being who is the Source and Lord of all that was, is and ever will be."<sup>828</sup> Similarly, the Son, relatively, is the Son in relation to the Father and the Spirit. The Son, absolutely, is also the fullness of the Trinitarian Godhead, unconditionally God and thus in the incarnation unconditionally 'God with us.'<sup>829</sup> Finally, the Spirit, relatively, is the Spirit-person distinct from the Father and the Son. The Spirit, absolutely, is the one Spirit of God.<sup>830</sup> Absolutely considered Father,

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<sup>825</sup> Ibid., 167. Torrance here gives an impressive list of patristic references including Athenagoras, Athanasius, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Epiphanius, and Augustine to drive home the point that the Spirit is the intermediate, consubstantial communion between the Father and the Son.

<sup>826</sup> This is a criticism by Colin Gunton levelled against Augustine's depiction of the Holy Spirit as 'the bond of love' or 'a kind of consubstantial union' between the Father and the Spirit. Colin Gunton, "Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43, no. 01 (1990).

<sup>827</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 171.

<sup>828</sup> Ibid., 138-40.

<sup>829</sup> Ibid., 144-45.

<sup>830</sup> Ibid., 147-48.

Son, or Spirit are the one living God, the full being of God. Relatively considered, the Father, Son, and Spirit constitute the personal otherness within God in their distinctive onto-relations.

This distinction between absolute and relative aspects proves helpful in the case of the communion of the Spirit. Relatively considered, there is only one communion of the *Spirit* due to the unique personal properties of the Spirit in his two-way mediation between the Father and the Son. However, absolutely considered the *communion* of the Spirit is the one being-in-communion of God common to all three persons and reflects the unconditional consubstantiality of the Spirit with the Father and the Son. When Torrance thus speaks of the communion of the Spirit, his emphasis is on *homoousios*, the underived divinity of the Spirit.

If divine *communion* is the Spirit considered absolutely it makes no sense to restrict communion to the person of the Spirit only since, as *homoousios* established, all three share the one numerically identical concrete being-in-communion of God. We must also be able to speak of the communion of the Son and the communion of the Father together with the communion of the Spirit if *homoousios* is to be taken seriously. It does not reduce the Spirit to the non-personal being of God because relatively considered the Spirit is clearly other than Father and Son. Torrance's distinction between 'relative' and 'absolute' lets us speak of the communion of the Spirit as the very communion of God's being. In light of *homoousios* applied to all three persons, the absoluteness of the communion of the Spirit lets us expand communion equally and unconditionally to the Father and the Son also. Just as there is the communion of the Spirit between the Father and the Son, there is the communion of the Son between the Father and the Spirit and the communion of the Father between the Son and the Spirit making their mutual mediation possible in the first place. Relatively considered each person is distinguished in their particular relation between two others but absolutely considered there is but one divine Trinitarian communion of Father, Son, and Spirit.

Relatively considered, the communion, and thus the mediation, which the Spirit is between the Father and the Son is unique to the breathed-out Spirit in that only the Spirit is between the Father and the Son. The Spirit here is neither the Father nor the Son but a third among two others. Absolutely considered, the communion, and thus the mediation which the Spirit is, is the very being of the triune God and is the one mediating movement of love that the Father, the Son, and

the Spirit have unconditionally and absolutely in common. The Spirit absolutely here is both Father and Son. This pattern occurs threefold in the Trinity.

Relatively considered, the mediation of the Son is the unique two-way communion of the only-begotten Son between the Father and his Spirit. The Son is neither Father nor Spirit but the third who distinguishes and upholds the two others. Absolutely considered, the mediation of the Son is the unconditional divinity of the Son that the Father and Spirit have in common and is the very being of God. The Son in this regard is both Father and Spirit.

Relatively considered, the mediation of the Father is the unique unbegotten two-way communion between the Son and the Spirit who on account of the Father's mediation can mutually mediate each other. The Father is neither the Son nor the Spirit. Absolutely considered, the mediation of the Father is the very same communion of the Spirit and the Son. The Father is the very being of God, both Son and Spirit.

Mediation relatively considered distinguishes between the three persons by establishing three distinct unique two-way mediations between two real others. These are the onto-relations that constitute the persons. Mediation absolutely considered is a unifying concept, the personal, dynamic, relational being of God. In God, there is one absolute eternal movement of mediation forever taking place in three relative personal two-way communion-constituting mediators. Mediation belongs to all of the persons as it belongs to each of the persons and works as both distinguishing and unifying principle in the Trinity.

Thus 'mediation' as a concept to describe God can be traced from the economic salvific activity of God in creation, through the historical missions and corresponding eternal processions of Son and Spirit, to the eternal communion of love which is God's very being-for-others.

### **Towards a Doctrine of a Liminal Trinity**

So far, the case for a doctrine of the Trinity with 'mediation' at its centre has been made. While chapter twelve addressed the possibility of speaking of God in terms of 'liminality' through Miyahira's theology of 'betweenness'<sup>831</sup> and chapter thirteen

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<sup>831</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*.

discussed Christ's death on the cross in Brunner's work<sup>832</sup> as an instance of 'non-place', the task remains to more explicitly link this doctrine of the Trinity in terms of mediation based on Torrance's theology<sup>833</sup> with TCKs' experience of living in liminality<sup>834</sup> explored in part two. The concept of being both 'a part of' and 'apart from'<sup>835</sup> as well as 'at home everywhere and nowhere'<sup>836</sup> was explored through Victor Turner's 'liminality'<sup>837</sup>, Marc Augé's 'non-place'<sup>838</sup>, Zygmunt Bauman's 'liquid modernity'<sup>839</sup>, and Janet Bennett's 'constructive marginality'<sup>840</sup>. A doctrine of the Trinity in terms of liminality based on mediation would be a theological example of constructive marginality at the very core of Christianity and would present the doctrine of the Trinity through concepts that truly resonate with TCKs.

To speak of liminality and mediation within God can be misunderstood. A doctrine of the Trinity in terms of liminality, non-place, liquidity, marginalization and mediation does not argue that God is a victim of marginalization, that God is going through a process of transformation towards perfection or that there exists discord within God which needs to be overcome by reconciling mediation. Instead, it makes the case that there is genuine otherness and self-transcendence within the life of the Trinity. A doctrine of the Trinity in terms of liminality agrees with Torrance's view that God's being is a 'being for others'.<sup>841</sup> Liminality, non-place, liquidity, constructive marginality are now each applied to the Trinity.

### **Liminality in the Trinity**

Miyahira described each Trinitarian person as 'divine betweenness'<sup>842</sup> which differentiates between the two other persons. Building on Torrance's insights, this chapter has gone further to argue that based on the mutual mediations of the Son and the Spirit in the economy, all three divine persons can be seen as eternal mediators

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<sup>832</sup> Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*.

<sup>833</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*.

<sup>834</sup> Schaetti and Ramsey, "The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality."

<sup>835</sup> Useem and Downie, "Third-Culture Kids," 22.

<sup>836</sup> Useem and Cottrell, "Adult Third Culture Kids," 32-33.

<sup>837</sup> Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites De Passage*."; "Liminality and Community."

<sup>838</sup> Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*.

<sup>839</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*.

<sup>840</sup> Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training."

<sup>841</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 133.

<sup>842</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 157-59.



moving in between the two other divine persons in a two-way mediating movement of love. Furthermore, each person can display an absolute as well as a relative dimension. This view of divine persons as in between mediators can now be described in terms of liminality, a concept central to TCKs' identity who are said to live in perpetual liminality<sup>843</sup>: Each divine person exists 'between and betwixt' the other two in a position of neither/nor (relative) and both/and (absolute). Liminality here acts as a temporal metaphor for otherness within the Trinity which imagines a 'before' and 'after' and a liminal period in between which is balanced on the threshold, informed by both yet also different from both.

Liminality can be applied to the person of the Son as follows. The liminal Son is both Father and Spirit in the sense that he is the homoousial communion between the two (the Son absolutely considered). In the movement of love from Father to the Spirit, the Son represents the Father to the Spirit, and in the echoing movement of love from the Spirit to the Father, the Son represents the Spirit to the Father. In another sense, however, the Son is neither the Father nor the Spirit but a third in between who distinguishes between the Father and the Spirit (the Son relatively considered). The Son's uniqueness rests in his distinctive mediation on the threshold between the Father and his Spirit in the Spirit's procession. The Son both mediates the Father's breathing out of the Spirit and the Spirit's procession from the Father. The Son also maintains genuine otherness between the Father and the Spirit by establishing a threshold between the two. Thus intimately bound to the procession of the Spirit, the liminal Son plays the dual role of both distinguishing and uniting the Father and the Spirit.

Turner argues that persons in liminality are invisible, metaphorically 'dead', without rights, but that they also transcend the categories of the before and after.<sup>844</sup> Similarly, the Son in his liminality becomes structurally invisible as he mediates selflessly between the Father and the Spirit. The Son can be said to have 'died' to the other two persons in his liminality, giving himself completely to the communion of the Father and the Spirit. Establishing the Father as Father and the Spirit as Spirit through his mediation, the Son becomes a no-one and forsakes all rights to an

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<sup>843</sup> Schaetti and Ramsey, "The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality," par. 17; Gilbert, "Loss and Grief between and among Cultures: The Experience of Third Culture Kids," 94.

<sup>844</sup> Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites De Passage*." See also: Beech, "Liminality and the Practices of Identity Reconstruction," 287.

independent existence apart from the communion of the other two in the Spirit's procession from the Father. However, the Son's liminality also constitutes a 'sacred poverty' which lets him transcend the categories of either Father or Son within the Trinity and lets him exist on the threshold as that which is neither the Father nor the Spirit.

Liminality thus serves as a metaphor to imagine the Son's mediation in the Father's breathing out of the Spirit and the Spirit's procession from the Father. The Son holds the other two apart as the third person who is neither Father nor Spirit and also holds the two together as the personal homoousial bond who is both Father and Spirit.

The same case can be made for the liminality of the Spirit and the liminality of the Father. On the one hand, the liminal Spirit (absolutely considered) in his mediation between the Father and the Son is both Father and Son as their homoousial bond that unites the two in the Father's generation of the Son. The Father and Son love each other through the bond of the Spirit. On the other hand, the Spirit (relatively considered) is neither Father nor Son but constitutes a third in between the Father and the Son. The Son is begotten from the Father and stands as a genuine other apart from the Father through the liminality of the Spirit who establishes a threshold between the two in the generation of the Son. The Spirit's liminality is thus found in his mediation of the generation of the Son from the Father.

Correspondingly, as the person from whom both Son and Spirit proceed, the Father (absolutely considered) is both Son and Spirit. The Son and the Spirit exist in communion only through the liminal Father they both have in common. However, as the one standing in between the two, the liminal Father, being neither Son nor Spirit, also distinguishes the two and guarantees their otherness. Thus the Father's liminality is the eternal ground of being for both the Son and the Spirit in their relative uniqueness.

Each of the three persons gives themselves complete for the sake of the other two and can be said to 'die' in their liminality. As neither *this* person nor *that* person in between, however, each divine person also maintains genuine liminal otherness in the Trinitarian life of God. It is through the liminality of the Son that the Father sees the Spirit as truly another apart from him and vice versa. It is through the liminality of the Spirit that the Father sees the Son as truly another person and vice versa. And it is through the liminality of the Father that the Son and the Spirit are truly different

and can love each other in a non-narcissistic way.

### **Trinitarian Non-Place**

Liminality in the Trinity as applied above fits neatly with the idea that each person constitutes a sacred, liminal 'space' in between the other persons. In this space, genuine interactions become possible. Thus, applied theologically, Augé's non-place is a spatial metaphor for the Trinitarian liminality of each person. Augé distinguished between anthropological place with identity, history, relation and non-place without identity, history, and relation.<sup>845</sup> Non-place, far from being a place of insignificance, is a linking space, a neutral place where others from different anthropological places can enter into communion. Theologically speaking, each liminal divine person can be imagined to constitute such a non-place in between the other two persons.

The Son in his liminality constitutes the non-place in between, on the one hand, the Father in his 'identity', 'history', and 'relation' as Father of the Son and breather of the Spirit and, on the other hand, the Spirit in his 'identity', 'history', and 'relations' as the person proceeding from the Father and/through the Son. 'Identity', 'history', and 'relations' here stand metaphorically for each person's relative distinctiveness in the Trinity. The Father and the Spirit in this case are imagined to constitute anthropological places which are linked through the non-place of the liminal Son. In his mediation, the Son opens up a neutral space for the Father and the Spirit to step into without the other dominating the other, without destroying their balanced onto-relation. Each person can remain themselves through the selfless sacrifice of the Son who, as non-place in between the Father and Spirit, guarantees their distinctiveness while allowing their communion. The Son carves out within the being of God a selfless non-space for others to be in order for God to be more than tyrannically mono-personal or narcissistically bi-personal. The non-place of the person of the Son represents the principle of self-transcendence, of God's ability to overcome a single 'identity', 'history', and 'relation' to include otherness in the Trinitarian life of God.

Similarly, the liminal Spirit constitutes the non-place between the anthropological places of the ingenerate begetting Father and the eternally begotten Son. The liminal Spirit creates the empty space in God's being from which

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<sup>845</sup> Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*.

distinctions can arise between the Father and the Son. The non-space of the Spirit constitutes the background in which the loving communion the Father and Son takes place. In the non-place of the Spirit, there exists an eternal space in God where the Father and the Son encounter, love, and glorify each other.

Finally, the liminal Father constitutes the non-place between the anthropological places of the breathed out Spirit and the begotten Son. The Father in his liminality carves out a space in God's being for the genuine otherness and communion of the Son and the Spirit. The Father's non-place establishes the Son and Spirit's ground of being. In this sense, the Father can be seen as the primordial '*tohu wa-bohu*'<sup>846</sup> place which makes possible the two distinct processions of the Son and Spirit.

Thus liminality and non-place, which play such significant roles in TCKs' experience, can become temporal and spatial metaphors to describe the betweenness and mediation of God's Trinitarian relations. Liminality and non-place describe each person as taking on two separate roles: that of the mediating liminal person in non-place and that of the mediated person on each end who is distinguished and brought into communion. While TCKs mostly see themselves as the ones in liminality between the host and first contexts, for liminality to be a reality within God there also has to be the non-liminal. Yet it is always the non-liminal being invited to enter into liminality by the person in between. Furthermore, while being non-liminal in one sense (e.g. the Father in relation to the Spirit through the liminality of the Son) each person is always also simultaneously liminal in another sense (e.g. the Father in his liminality in between the Son and the Spirit). The Trinity thus perfectly balances 'being oneself' with 'letting others be themselves'.

### **Liquid Trinity**

This brings the discussion of a liminal Trinity to Bauman's dual concepts of liquidity and solidity.<sup>847</sup> As explored in chapter ten, Bauman has criticised the trend to remain exclusively liquid so as not to commit oneself or tie oneself down.<sup>848</sup> Liquids without gaps to fill and forms to take the shape of risk becoming irrelevant puddles.

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<sup>846</sup> '*formless and empty*', Genesis 1:2.

<sup>847</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*.

<sup>848</sup> "From Pilgrim to Tourist - or a Short History of Identity."; Bauman and Vecchi, *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*.

TCKs without a purposeful engagement in contexts such as their host or home cultures risk experiencing their marginality as encapsulating. The Trinity can be seen as an interplay of solid and liquid states which safeguards liquidity from becoming pointless aloofness and demonstrates for TCKs a purposeful commitment at the heart of the Trinity.

A liquid Trinity imagines the mediating divine person freely shifting shapes like a liquid in the interplay of the other two mediated persons in that instance solidify. The liminal Son in between the Father and the Spirit becomes a shapeshifting liquid, filling the space between the persons thereby becoming a seamless medium between them. The image of engine lubricant reducing wear on moving parts in an internal combustion engine might serve as an illustration. The liquid Son takes on the shape of the Father towards the Spirit and the shape of the Spirit towards the Father and thus brings the two into contact without the Father losing his fatherly quality and the Spirit losing his spiritual quality. The liquid Son in between the Father and the Spirit maintains harmony even amidst genuine difference. It is the unbound freedom of liminality that lets the Son exhibit such plasticity in his liquid mediation. The Son's fluidity does not result in his disassociation from the Father and the Spirit but in his unique mediatorial engagement in between the two as the one through whom the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the one through whom the Spirit pays homage to the Father. Thus, in the Son's mediation between the Father and the Spirit, the Son is in a liquid state but the Father and the Spirit are in solid states.

Similarly, the Spirit in his liminality between the Father and the Son takes on the role of the liquid medium in between the two. The liquid Spirit fills the void in between the Father and the Son maintaining their eternal relation as well as their distinctiveness as Father of the Son and Son of the Father. The fluid Spirit takes on the shape of the Father towards the Son and the Son towards the Father in his freedom. The liquidity of the Spirit allows the existence of fatherly and filial solids within the Trinity without dissonance.

Correspondingly, the Father in his liminality in between the Son and the Spirit fills the empty space with his liquid presence completely engulfing the surface area of the solid Son or solid Spirit. The Father takes on the shape of the Son towards the Spirit and the shape of the Spirit towards the Son freely shifting shapes in his fluidity. The liminal Father thus freely loves the Son and the Spirit in his liminality.

The metaphor of liquidity thus imagines the Trinitarian persons to melt as well as solidify in their roles as mediators and the mediated, freely shifting forms and function but maintaining one purpose, namely, that of performing effective mediation for the benefit of others in loving communion. The divine persons put their freedom rooted in liminality to work in mediation between different others. Because each person betwixt and between the others is both neither/nor and both/and they can take on the shape of two others.

### **Constructive Marginality in the Trinity**

As this presentation of a liminal Trinity has already hinted at, Trinitarian liminality as described above exhibits constructive marginality which can overcome dichotomies and exert purposeful commitment without fear.<sup>849</sup> A constructive marginal construct contexts intentionally, experiences authenticity, and shifts smoothly between identification with others (both/and; 'being a part of') as well differing from others (neither/nor; 'being apart from').

The divine persons in their liminality display this commitment to mediation in their liminality and thus own their in-betweenness wholeheartedly. The Trinitarian persons in their liminality can thus be described as the perfect embodiment of constructive marginality. As Muneo Yoshikawa's double swing model describes, the divine persons find themselves in a dynamic in-between able to overcome the dichotomy of either/or between two divine persons.<sup>850</sup>

Furthermore, as Bochner et al. suggest the divine mediating persons are able to relate perfectly to their two counterparts while also transcending the other two.<sup>851</sup> In the words of Ronald Taft, in their mediation the divine persons have "two skills in one skull".<sup>852</sup> The Son has intimate knowledge of the Father as well as of the Spirit in his mediation between them; the Spirit of the Father and the Son; and the Father of the Son and Spirit. This is possible as all three persons have one numerically identical being.

However, even in their relative difference in their onto-relations, each person standing in between the other two is able to relate intimately to the persons at both

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<sup>849</sup> Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training."

<sup>850</sup> Yoshikawa, "Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Perceptual Development."; "The Double Swing Model of Intercultural Communication between the East and the West."

<sup>851</sup> Bochner, *The Mediating Person: Bridges between Cultures*, 55.

<sup>852</sup> Taft, "The Role and Personality of the Mediator," 53.

ends of the relation. The Son is intimately engaged in the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Spirit's glorification of the Father. The Spirit is intimately engaged in the generation of the Son from the Father and the Son's obedience to the Father. The Father is intimately engaged in the two processions emanating from his being and in the mutual mediation between the Spirit and the Son.

As mediators, metaphorically speaking each person can thus be said to be 'bilingual': the Son is able to translate the Father spiritually towards the Spirit and the Spirit fatherly towards the Father in his mediation between the two; the Spirit translates the Father filially towards the Son and the Son fatherly towards the Father in his mediation between the two; and the Father translate the Son spiritually towards the Spirit and the Spirit filially towards the Son as mediator in between the two.

In fact, it can be argued that the bilingual mediation of the Son in between the Father and Spirit constitutes who the Son is eternally, inherently, and antecedently to his faithful mediation between God and humanity and in the pouring out of the Spirit onto creation. The bilingual mediation of the Spirit between the Father and the Son constitutes who the Spirit is eternally, inherently, and antecedently to his faithful mediation between the Father and the Son in his birth, life, death, and resurrection and in the actualization of the mediation of the Son within each believer. The bilingual mediation of the Father between the Son and the Spirit is who the Father is eternally, inherently, and antecedently to the sending out of the Spirit and the Son in their mutual mediation.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that mediation proves to be a rich enough concept to speak of the various aspects of the Trinitarian self-revelation of God and, while not an exclusive language to describe the ineffable Holy Trinity, nevertheless is a valid language to speak of God. Mediation succeeds in describing the salvific work of the Spirit and the Son, the onto-relational dynamics that constitute the persons, and the one absolute communion-constituting being of the Trinity expressed relatively and uniquely in each person.

Based on this doctrine of the Trinity in terms of mediation implicit in Torrance's mature theology, the theological application of the key TCK concept identified in part two becomes possible. This chapter thus presented a doctrine of the Trinity in terms of liminality, non-place, liquidity, and constructive marginality.

Speaking of the Trinity in such terms constitutes a step forward towards a TCK theology able to resonate with TCKs in their lived experience of liminality. By highlighting the aspect of mediatorial liminality within the dynamics of the Trinity, TCKs can find a spark of divinity in their everyday lives as cultural mediators.

Having fleshed out the doctrine of the Trinity in terms familiar to TCKs, next a closer look is given to the incarnation of the Son and his liminality as a two-natured mediator between God and humanity.



## Chapter 17

### Towards a Liminal Christology

#### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to build on the previous argument for a liminal Trinity and draw conclusions of what it means for the incarnation of the Son. If liminality and mediation are at the heart of the Trinity, then we ought to be able to give an account of the life and death of Jesus Christ in accordance with these. The guiding themes continue to be first and foremost liminality<sup>853</sup>, together with non-place<sup>854</sup>, liquidity<sup>855</sup>, and mediation<sup>856</sup>. This chapter will rely on Thomas Torrance's dynamic two-nature Christology which sees Christ as mediator amidst enmity between God and humanity and argues for Christ as the proto-Third Culture Kid being both translator between God and humanity (mediation of revelation) and mediator between two parties at odds (mediation of reconciliation). The divine nature symbolizes Christ's 'home culture' and the human nature symbolises Christ's 'host culture'.

Theological works emphasizing the marginality of Christ's assumed human nature as a first century Galilean Jew already exist. For example, the Korean American theologian Sang Hyn Lee writes from the perspective of the marginalization of Korean immigrants in the United States describing how their encapsulating marginality can be creatively transformed through the encounter with a Christ who is himself liminal.<sup>857</sup> Lee makes the case for the geographical, cultural, and religious liminality of Christ's assumed Galilean humanity in solidarity with the marginalized.<sup>858</sup>

While such exploration of Christ's liminality in his humanity certainly has its place, this chapter seeks to describe Christ's theological liminality as the Son of God who is "send into the far country"<sup>859</sup> in order to mediate between "the things of God

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<sup>853</sup> Turner, "Liminality and Community." Schaetti and Ramsey, "The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality."

<sup>854</sup> Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*.

<sup>855</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*.

<sup>856</sup> Bochner, *The Mediating Person: Bridges between Cultures*.

<sup>857</sup> Sang Hyun Lee, *From a Liminal Place: An Asian American Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

<sup>858</sup> Ibid., 43-44.

<sup>859</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 157-210.

and the things of humanity.”<sup>860</sup> We will thus argue that Christ’s liminality can most clearly be seen in his two-natured person, betwixt and between God and humanity who are at odds with each other. Furthermore, while Nozomu Miyahira sees this ‘betweenness’ as a sinful obstacle to overcome,<sup>861</sup> we will argue that Christ in his personal liminality opens up a reconciling space between God and humanity. This ‘betweenness’ is thus a positive outcome of Christ’s work as mediator and makes possible the identity bestowing encounter with Emil Brunner’s ‘*Gott-zum-Menschen-hin*.’<sup>862</sup>

This chapter, first, briefly reviews the traditional two-nature Christology of the Chalcedonian settlement, second, analyses Torrance’s criticism of Chalcedon, third, outlines Torrance’s alternative dynamic doctrine of Christ, and finally constructs a liminal doctrine of Christ fitting for a TCK-Theology.

### **The Two-natured Christology of the Chalcedonian Settlement**

A brief review of the traditional two-nature Christology will help set our subsequent discussion of the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures on a firm theological foundation. After the outbreak of the Nestorian and the Monophysite controversies, the fourth ecumenical council at Chalcedon in AD 451 officially settled the question of the unity of the person of Christ and the distinction of the divine and human natures.<sup>863</sup> Two parties, Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376-444) and his various supporters based in Alexandria and the Antioch educated bishop of Constantinople Nestorius (c. 386-450) with the support of the Syrian bishops, had alternative understandings of the unity and distinction of the divinity and humanity of Christ.

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<sup>860</sup> Athanasius, *Contra Arianos*, IV, 6.

<sup>861</sup> Miyahira defines this God-human ‘betweenness’ as ignorance, disbelief, and dishonour. Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*, 190-93.

<sup>862</sup> Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*.

<sup>863</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, Revised ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 1978), 310 - 43; Justo L. González, *A History of Christian Thought, Revised Edition*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 353 - 80; Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, "General Introduction," in *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon Volume One*, ed. Richard Price and Michael Gaddis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005); David M. Gwynn, "The Council of Chalcedon and the Definition of Christian Tradition," in *Chalcedon in Context : Church Councils 400-700*, ed. Richard Price and Mary Whitby (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009).

The question of the unqualified divinity of the Word of God was affirmed against Arianism at the Council of Nicaea in 325<sup>864</sup> and the complete humanity of Christ was affirmed against Apollinarianism at the Council of Constantinople in 381.<sup>865</sup> The discussion now shifted to how these two could be united in Jesus Christ. Cyril of Alexandria emphasised the unity of the one incarnate Christ over the God/human distinction but thereby endangered the authenticity of Christ's humanity.<sup>866</sup> Insisting on a hypostatic union, Cyril wanted to safeguard, first, the real presence of God in Jesus Christ,<sup>867</sup> and second, the exchange of properties between the natures<sup>868</sup>. The whole point of the incarnation was that the impassible God truly became involved in human affairs and that humanity was transformed by God.<sup>869</sup>

Nestorius argued that this hypostatic union made God passible and divinizes humanity thereby destroying any resemblance of an authentic humanity.<sup>870</sup> In his sharp distinction between divinity and humanity, Nestorius, first, insisted on maintaining the unqualified impassibility of the Word, and second, argued for the genuine human life of growth and development in Jesus if he was to be the second Adam of redemption.<sup>871</sup> Cyril accused Nestorius of splitting the one incarnate Word into two loosely related independent persons.<sup>872</sup>

J. N. D. Kelly comments that "[e]ach had its strong points, but also its counter-balancing defects, and it must have been obvious that, if a solution was to be found,

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<sup>864</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 223-51; González, *A History of Christian Thought, Revised Edition*, 1, 261 - 90.

<sup>865</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 280 - 309; González, *A History of Christian Thought, Revised Edition*, 1, 335 - 52.

<sup>866</sup> Cyril, *Second Letter to Nestorius; Third Letter to Nestorius; Five Tomes against Nestorius; On the Unity of Christ*.

<sup>867</sup> Cyril, believing it to come from Athanasius, resorted to the Apollinarian phrase of 'one nature, and that incarnate, of the Word' to make his case for the inseparability of natures and concrete unity in Christ. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 319; González, *A History of Christian Thought, Revised Edition*, 1, 365.

<sup>868</sup> Cyril here argued that "the Word suffered impassibly", attributing human suffering to the Word while maintaining an uncompromised divine nature. Cyril, *On the Unity of Christ*, trans. John Anthony McGuckin (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 115, 17, 18; Paul Gavrilyuk, "Theopatheia: Nestorius's Main Charge against Cyril of Alexandria," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56, no. 2 (2003): 193.

<sup>869</sup> "Theopatheia: Nestorius's Main Charge against Cyril of Alexandria," 196.

<sup>870</sup> Nestorius' mature and, as opposed to the fragments preserved in the writings of his adversaries, more reliable theology can be found in the recently (1889) discovered *Book of Heracleides* written shortly before his death while in exile ca. 451. Nestorius, *The Bazaar of Heracleides*, trans. Leonard Hodgson and Godfrey Rolles Driver (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925).

<sup>871</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 312-13.

<sup>872</sup> Nestorius intended to protect the integrity of Christ's humanity and divinity and demonstrate their objective reality by proposing two *prosopa* but distinguished these from a "prosopon of union" or "prosopon of the economy". Nestorius, *The Bazaar of Heracleides*, 58, 148, 66, 70, 220, 319; Milton V. Anastos, "Nestorius Was Orthodox," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16 (1962).

they would both have to make their contributions.”<sup>873</sup> The first step towards agreement came in the form of the Formula of Union of AD 433.<sup>874</sup> It affirmed the duality of natures but also the Word as the subject of the Man-God. Further progress was made through the introduction of insights from the Latin tradition through Pope Leo’s Tome.<sup>875</sup> Leo initially supported Cyril but, as the Monophysite controversy erupted, adopted a more Antiochian stance emphasizing the assumption of a concrete human being with moral and psychological autonomy.<sup>876</sup> The Tome, first, identifies the person of the incarnate God-man with the Word, second, argues that nevertheless each nature retains their unique properties, third, maintains that each nature, while always acting in harmony, has their own principle of operation, and finally, suggests that due to the unity of the person and the duality of the natures it is possible to predicate properties from both natures to the one numerically identical person of Christ without destroying the integrity of the natures.<sup>877</sup>

Finally, the fourth ecumenical council held in Chalcedon in 451 officially settled the question of how to describe the unity and the duality in the incarnate Christ. It produced a Definition of Faith including a formal confession.<sup>878</sup> The confession draws on Cyril’s letters, the Formula of Union, Leo’s Tome, and Flavian’s Confession of Faith<sup>879</sup>. The Confession rejects the duality of sons, the passibility of the Word, the mixture of the natures, a single nature after the union, and an alien human nature of Christ.<sup>880</sup>

The following points are stressed in the Confession. First, the Confession repeatedly mentions that Christ is ‘the very same Son’ in his humanity as well as divinity. It treats ‘prosopon’ and ‘hypostasis’ synonymously reserving them to refer

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<sup>873</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 310.

<sup>874</sup> The Formula of Union was realized through negotiations between Cyril and John of Antioch. González, *A History of Christian Thought, Revised Edition*, 1, 357-58. The Formula of Union can be found in: Cyril, *Letter to John of Antioch*.

<sup>875</sup> Leo, *Letter* 28. Originally written in AD 449 in response to Bishop of Constantinople Flavian’s request to condemn Eutyches who professed two natures before the incarnation but only one after, Leo’s Tome was denied an audience until the council of Chalcedon in AD 451.

<sup>876</sup> Philip L. Barclift, "The Shifting Tones of Pope Leo the Great's Christological Vocabulary," *Church History* 66, no. 2 (1997).

<sup>877</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 70.

<sup>878</sup> For the full text see: *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, Tome II, Vol. I, Part 2, p. 126-30. For the English translation of the full text see: Richard A. Norris, ed. *The Christological Controversy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 155-59.

<sup>879</sup> Flavian’s Confession: “We confess that Christ is of two natures after the incarnation, confessing one Christ, one Son, one Lord, in one hypostasis and one prosōpon.” *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, Tome II, Vol. I, Part 1, p. 114.

<sup>880</sup> Norris, *The Christological Controversy*, 158.

to the unity of Christ. The two natures do not divide Christ into ‘two prosopa’. The divine Word is thus the one unique subject of the incarnate. Second, it affirms Christ’s consubstantiality with us. Christ’s humanity is the very same humanity as ours, complete with soul and body, except for sin. Third, Mary is named ‘theotokos’, as the Son was born of her according to his humanity, thereby affirming the communication of properties in the Son. Fourthly, the Son is acknowledged ‘in two natures’ as opposed to ‘from/of two natures’ as it could be misunderstood to refer to the dual natures prior to the union only.<sup>881</sup>

The confession reserves *physis* (nature) to refer to the duality in Christ and clearly distinguished it from *prosopon* / *hypostasis*. The two natures are ‘*inconfuse, immutabiliter, indivise, inseparabiliter*’ (without confusion, without change, without division, without separation). The former two words are meant to explicitly reject Eutychianism’s fusion of two natures into one God-human nature resulting in the destruction of the integrity of the respective natures. The latter two words are meant to exclude Nestorianism’s excessive separation of the two natures at the expense of the integrity of the unity of the one person of Christ. Thus, each nature’s integrity (the impassibility of the Godhead and the specific identity of Christ’s humanity to ours) is preserved. Each nature operates distinctively but comes together in the one person of Christ.<sup>882</sup>

This review of the traditional two-nature Christology shows the soteriological concerns behind the discussion. The unity of Christ in one person must be affirmed if Jesus is to truly reveal and reconcile us to God. Along with the hypostatic union some form of exchange of properties between the natures must also be maintained in order for Jesus’ actions to be attributed to God and hence to be able to argue that the assumed humanity was redeemed (and thus transformed from corrupted to healed) through the Son. However, at the same time each nature’s reality must be protected. The humanity of Christ, while relying for its existence on the hypostasis of the Son (and thus being unlike our humanity), must be granted its own space to grow and suffer if it is to have any kind of resemblance to our adamic experience of what it means to be human. Correspondingly, while attributing the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus to the second person of the Trinity, God must be said to

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<sup>881</sup> For details, see Kelly’s discussion: Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 340.

<sup>882</sup> *Ibid.*, 341.

faithfully remain God in the incarnation. There emerges a tension between the need for Christ's humanity to be a genuine human nature like ours existing under the impact of a fallen world while also being a unique faithful human nature completely unlike ours. Similarly, ungodly human attributes such as suffering, death, and even sin are attributed to the divine person of the Son while the Son cannot be thought of as ceasing to be God. These tensions while woven into the text of the confession are largely left for others to wrestle with.

Thus Chalcedon arrived at a description of the status of the incarnate Christ, two natures in one person. The hypostatic union of divine and human nature in the one and only second person of the Trinity has this agreement as its basis and it is this Chalcedonian framework which will serve as our foundation for constructing an account of the incarnate Christ as our liminal mediator who due to his personal unity is able to achieve the reconciliation between God and humanity, both representing God to humanity and humanity to God. Because of the communication of attributes, we can speak of God truly speaking and acting as human and our humanity truly being resurrected and present at the right hand of the Father.

### **Thomas Torrance on Chalcedon's Christology**

At this point our discussion of the two natures in one person will benefit greatly from the insights of Torrance. While the Chalcedonian settlement was a monumental accomplishment, its Christology falls short on several accounts.<sup>883</sup> The Christ of Chalcedon was a mostly *static* figure meant to ward off erroneous conceptions of what Christ is. We, however, are more interested in a *dynamic* account of the person of Christ as mediator in the tradition of Athanasius: Christ who in his person and work ministers of the things of humanity to God and of the things of God to humanity.<sup>884</sup> We are looking for ways to describe a metaphorical 'bilingual Christ' who mediates revelation and a metaphorical 'bicultural Christ' who mediates reconciliation not just at his birth but throughout his life, death, and resurrection. Torrance argues against the static description of Christ at Chalcedon for a more

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<sup>883</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation : The Person and Life of Christ*. See especially chapter 5 "Hypostatic Union" (ibid., 181-234.) for Torrance's take on Chalcedon.

<sup>884</sup> Athanasius, *Contra Arianos*, IV, 6. See also the important role Athanasius plays in Torrance's theology: Thomas F. Torrance, "Athanasius: A Study in the Foundations of Classical Theology," in *Theology in Reconciliation : Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976).

dynamic account which sees the hypostatic union as something that Christ achieves in his birth, life, death, and resurrection.

### **Torrance's Three Points of Criticism**

The hypostatic union plays a significant role in Torrance's doctrine of atonement<sup>885</sup> and while he acknowledges Chalcedon's contribution he also expresses his dissatisfaction with it:

There can be no doubt that the Chalcedonian formulation of the [hypostatic] Union in Christ was one of the greatest and most important in the whole field of theology, and yet it was formulated in almost entire abstraction from the historical life and work of Jesus Christ from His birth to His resurrection. It is one of the most pressing needs of theology to have the hypostatic union restated much more in terms of the mission of Christ, much more from the perspective of the cross and resurrection.<sup>886</sup>

Torrance has three issues with this abstract account of the hypostatic union: first, the lack of connection to atonement; second, the ambiguous nature of Christ's 'neutral' humanity; third, the so-called 'Latin Heresy'.

#### **(a) Incarnation and Atonement**

Torrance argues that the early Church failed to relate the incarnation to Christ's atoning work.<sup>887</sup> He writes that "we have to see that reconciliation is the hypostatic union at work in expiation and atonement, and therefore that [the] hypostatic union cannot be expounded aright except in terms of Christ's active ministry within our (...) estrangement."<sup>888</sup> Chalcedon does not go far enough and leaves the impression that atonement is something added to the hypostatic union.<sup>889</sup> In Torrance, the incarnation and atonement are intrinsically linked to one another instead.<sup>890</sup> Gunther Pratz comments that for Torrance "the incarnation has to be seen as essentially redemptive, and the redemption has to be seen as inherently incarnational or

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<sup>885</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 81-84.

<sup>886</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, "The Atonement and the Oneness of the Church," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 7, no. 03 (1954): 246.

<sup>887</sup> *Incarnation : The Person and Life of Christ*, 183.

<sup>888</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>889</sup> "The Atonement and the Oneness of the Church," 247.

<sup>890</sup> Gunther Pratz, "The Relationship between Incarnation and Atonement in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 3, no. 2 (1998). (This article uses paragraph numbers 1 to 62 in lieu of page numbers.)

ontological.”<sup>891</sup> The two cannot be dealt with in isolation because the incarnation, far from being a one-time event, is a continuing movement of identification with humanity in Christ’s life. Similarly, the atonement is not merely about the cross but Christ began to pay the price of our redemption from conception and continued to do so until his vicarious death.<sup>892</sup> This means that the hypostatic union constitutes a ‘continuous union’ in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ.<sup>893</sup> The cross is the culmination of an intensifying enmity between the judge (*God incarnate*) and the judged (*God incarnate*) as a result of Christ’s increasing solidarity with sinners and growing interpenetration of our alienation from God.<sup>894</sup> Thus, the crucial issue is not the mere acknowledgment of the two natures in one person, but the working out of that union in the life of Christ for the purpose of our salvation in terms of Christ’s growing identification with sinful humanity and simultaneous living out of the obedience of the faithful Son of God.

#### **(b) The nature of Christ’s assumed humanity**

Torrance’s stress on Christ’s identification with sinners brings us to the second point: What is the nature of the assumed humanity of Christ? Was it a neutral humanity or ‘our adamic fallen human nature’<sup>895</sup>? Chalcedon stresses the complete consubstantiality of Christ with us but Torrance points out that “the Chalcedonian statement does not say that this human nature of Christ was human nature ‘under the servitude of sin’ as Athanasius insisted.”<sup>896</sup> He detects a growing shyness post-Nicaea of speaking of the assumption of ‘our flesh of sin’ in fear that it might damage the perfection of humanity in Christ.<sup>897</sup> The same tendency can be seen in Cyril who stressed that the life-giving ‘holy flesh’ of Christ is unlike our corrupted humanity.<sup>898</sup> Limiting the assumption to a neutral (unfallen) humanity goes against

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<sup>891</sup> Ibid., par. 12. See also: Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith : The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church*, 159.

<sup>892</sup> "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39, no. 4 (1986): 475. In this sense Torrance’s doctrines of incarnation and atonement are not an “Ereignistheologie” (theology of an event). See: "Cheap and Costly Grace," *The Baptist Quarterly* 22, no. 6 (1968): 295.

<sup>893</sup> *Incarnation : The Person and Life of Christ*, 106-07.

<sup>894</sup> Ibid., 110-11.

<sup>895</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>896</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>897</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>898</sup> Cyril, *Third Letter to Nestorius*.



the soteriological principle that ‘the unassumed is the unhealed’<sup>899</sup> (*non-assumptus*), a crucial principle in Torrance’s theology.<sup>900</sup> For Torrance, Christ penetrated our sinful humanity in order to sanctify it and bring it back into communion with God within himself.<sup>901</sup> He therefore describes it as a sinless assumption of our sinful adamic human nature in which Christ is both like us and unlike us.<sup>902</sup> Christ both identifies with our fallen nature and also sanctifies it within himself. Therefore, Torrance argues that “if we think of Christ as assuming neutral and perfect humanity, then the doctrine of the hypostatic union may well be stated *statically*. But if it is our fallen humanity that he sinlessly assumed, in order to heal and sanctify it, not only through the act of assumption, but through a life of perfect obedience and a death in sacrifice, then we cannot state the doctrine of the hypostatic union statically but must state it *dynamically*.”<sup>903</sup> A neutral humanity in Christ in a static union would merely be instrumental and atonement would become an act of God done externally *to* humanity rather than a truly incarnate divine act from *within* humanity.

### (c) The Latin Heresy

Finally, Torrance criticises what he calls ‘Latin Heresy.’<sup>904</sup> The Latin Heresy is an umbrella term for Torrance which includes all aspects of a dualistic, external relation between God and the world. Of interest is how this pertains to the incarnation and atonement. Torrance traces back the origins of the Latin Heresy to Leo’s Tome in which a dualist outlook separated the divine and the human in the person and work

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<sup>899</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation : The Person and Life of Christ*, 201. The principle goes back to: Gregory Nazianzus, *Epistle 101*.

<sup>900</sup> The *non-assumptus* can be found in: Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 250; *The Mediation of Christ*, 39-42; *The Trinitarian Faith : The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church*, 153-66. For the centrality of the *non-assumptus* in Torrance’s theology, see: Kevin Chiarot, *The Unassumed Is the Unhealed : The Humanity of Christ in the Theology of T.F. Torrance* (2013); Gerrit Scott Dawson, "Far as the Curse Is Found: The Significance of Christ's Assuming a Fallen Human Nature in the Torrance Theology," in *An Introduction to Torrance Theology: Discovering the Incarnate Saviour*, ed. Gerrit Scott Dawson (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2007). For how Torrance compares to others on this point, see: Kelly M. Kopic, "The Son’s Assumption of a Human Nature: A Call for Clarity," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 3, no. 2 (2001).

<sup>901</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation : The Person and Life of Christ*, 205.

<sup>902</sup> *Ibid.*, 203-04.

<sup>903</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>904</sup> "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy." Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 86-88. Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity*, 43.

of Christ and as a result started a trend that impoverished the doctrine of the atonement in the Latin Church.<sup>905</sup> Torrance writes:

[I]f we operate only with an *external* relation between the Son and the Father, we are unable to give any saving significance to the human life and activity of Christ in the form of a servant, for it rules out of account any direct personal intervention by God himself in our lost and damned human condition.<sup>906</sup>

Instead, we must see the hypostatic union as an *atoning union* of the Holy One and our sinful humanity in which atonement is accomplished internally, not as an external transaction between God and humanity. Viewing atonement apart from the hypostatic union of God and humanity in Christ depicts the cross mainly as an external transference of penalty between sinners and God.<sup>907</sup> Christ's humanity would have accomplished atonement by being a moral example of inspiration in self-giving on the cross or by being put to death as a scape goat for our sins granting us an alien forensic righteousness. How Christ lived out his life as the obedient Son of the Father, how the Father raised the Son from the dead to then ascend to his right hand would, strictly speaking, have no bearing on such a cross-centred atonement theory. Instead, Torrance sees Christ's atoning death as the outcome of the hypostatic union in which Christ is internally related to (i.e. *homoousios*) both God and sinful humanity. The cross then is the result of the Son, very God of very God, descending into our alienation from God, not the rejection by God of a perfect instrumental human nature upon whom humanity's sin is somehow transferred. For Torrance, the whole of Christ's life, death, and resurrection is a matter of restorative justice where the very corruption in the depth of our adamic human nature is undone *within* Christ in order to restore humanity.

### **Torrance's Dynamic Hypostatic Union**

Viewing the hypostatic union as an *atoning* mediation in which the Son sinlessly assumes our *fallen* adamic human nature in order to restore it from *within* through his birth, life, death, and resurrection requires a dynamic perspective of the hypostatic union that views the penetration of our alienated condition by the divine

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<sup>905</sup> Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," 477.

<sup>906</sup> Ibid., 473.

<sup>907</sup> Ibid., 476.

Son as an increasingly intensifying movement. Torrance therefore names it a 'continuous union.'<sup>908</sup>

Why is such a dynamic account of importance to us? First, a dynamic account of God moving into time is consistent with the dynamic account of the eternal triune mediating movements of love. Torrance writes that "the hypostatic union is grounded in the eternal communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit within the Holy Trinity."<sup>909</sup> The dynamic hypostatic union stands in continuity with our account of the Trinity as Torrance's Theorem<sup>910</sup> suggests. Treatment of the hypostatic union merits a description in terms of the language we have already applied to the Trinitarian relations. There is an eternal and essential relation between the hypostatic union of God and humanity in Christ and the tripersonal unity of the Trinity.<sup>911</sup>

Second, a dynamic account of the hypostatic union brings together the incarnation and the crucifixion. Instead of seeing the incarnation and atonement on the cross as two loosely related events, the hypostatic union and Christ's self-sacrifice belong to one and the same atoning divine movement in which the Son descends into our human condition and we ascend in union with him to communion with God. Christ's crucifixion and resurrection are the quintessential example of encapsulating and constructive marginality. If the death and resurrection of Christ is the incarnation at work in atonement, then this lets us describe the hypostatic union in light of Christ's liminality on the cross. This dynamic account of Christ's two natures in one person is fitting to a TCK-theology as the increasingly intensifying contradiction experienced by the Son in the continuous union drives our account of his liminality betwixt and between God and humanity who are at odds and in need of mediation.

What exactly does a 'dynamic' account of the hypostatic union entail? Torrance sees Christ as exercising a two-fold ministry.<sup>912</sup> Andrew Purves describes this as "a humanward and a Godward direction, in which Christ mediates God to us and us to God in the unity of his incarnate person."<sup>913</sup> In other words, there is a

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<sup>908</sup> *Incarnation : The Person and Life of Christ*, 105-60.

<sup>909</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>910</sup> Torrance restates his Theorem as follows: "What God is towards us in Christ, and in him towards us, in his *opus ad extra*, he is eternally in himself in his *opus ad intra*." *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>911</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>912</sup> *The Mediation of Christ*, 72.

<sup>913</sup> Andrew Purves, "The Christology of Thomas F. Torrance," in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T. F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 62.

human-directed movement and a God-directed movement in the life of Christ both of which need to be seen as taking place in the undivided unity of the person and the unconfused duality of natures.<sup>914</sup> We need to see the life of Christ as the work of the faithful and obedient Son of the Father as well as the work of the Servant who increasingly identifies with and remains faithful to the sinful humanity he assumed. Each of these movements, however, has a counter-movement of rejection: the fallen humanity Christ assumed has rejected God and God incarnate comes also to judge this fallen humanity. Both Godward and humanward movements thus need to be seen as incorporating the duality of Christ's fallen human and righteous divine natures. With the assumption of sinful human nature, each of the movements of Christ has the dual aspect of acceptance and rejection to it. We will look at each movement in turn.

### **The God-ward movement**

Since the Son is *homoousios* with the Father and thus is in unbroken relation with him even in his incarnation, the Son lives in perfect faithful obedience to his own Father from birth to death and resurrection.<sup>915</sup> For Torrance, this entails Christ's complete dependence on the Father in prayer<sup>916</sup>, Christ's absolute obedience to the Father<sup>917</sup>, and Christ's perfect reflection of the divine glory.<sup>918</sup> The goal of this Godward movement of faithfulness in Christ is to restore from within our estrangement from God the image of God in which humanity was created. The human response to God's word is actualised and secured in Christ's filial faithfulness to the Father. Unlike us in our estranged humanity, Christ lives out "the true life of man created after God and actualised in real righteousness and holiness."<sup>919</sup> In this sense Christ is unlike us.

This faithfulness of the Son to the Father needs to be seen in the light of both Christ's *sinless* assumption as well as Christ's assumption of *sinful* humanity. On the one hand, Christ vicariously lives out the perfect life God had envisioned for humanity in union with God. On the other hand, Christ appropriates and represents

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<sup>914</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 83.

<sup>915</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation : The Person and Life of Christ*, 114-29.

<sup>916</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-21.

<sup>917</sup> *Ibid.*, 121-26.

<sup>918</sup> *Ibid.*, 126-29.

<sup>919</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

before God our sinful humanity under God's judgment and accepts this judgment obediently. Torrance thus speaks of Christ's active and passive righteousness.<sup>920</sup> Christ's active obedience/righteousness corresponds to the above described positive fulfilment of Father's will in Christ's life. The passive obedience/righteousness means Christ's submission to the judgment of the Father. Christ assumed our fallen adamic humanity and willingly brings it before the Father to be judged and destroyed. The active obedience highlights the embodied living out of true sonship before the Father (*perfect incarnation* of the Son). The passive obedience highlights the divine act of bringing fallen humanity into God's holy presence (assumption of our *sinful humanity*). Both the incarnation and the crucifixion need to be seen as Christ being actively and passively obedient to the Father, living faithfully as the Son of the Father yet doing so within our cursed existence. Both the active and passive righteousness of Christ are dynamic in that they take place throughout the Son's mission but the passive obedience is most visible in the crucifixion.

In this sense of both representing humanity to God on our behalf as well as substituting for us in accepting judgment, Torrance, rather than speaking of a mere atoning vicarious death, speaks of the atoning "vicarious humanity of Jesus".<sup>921</sup> Christ from the beginning of the incarnation in birth to the ascension lives on behalf of humanity in active and passive obedience securing humanity's salvation.

### **The Human-ward Movement**

Torrance describes the second movement in Christ of God's faithfulness to humanity in terms of Christ as shepherd and king.<sup>922</sup> Christ the shepherd represents the compassion Christ has for his lost sheep, especially the marginalized people of his time.<sup>923</sup> Torrance describes Christ's compassion not as a feeling but an act, namely the act of taking on the suffering of others. Every act of healing or forgiveness thus cost Christ something and was performed in agony.<sup>924</sup> The assumption of our broken humanity was thus truly an act of making our brokenness his own and paying for our restoration. Christ lived his life increasingly appropriating our brokenness as an

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<sup>920</sup> Ibid., 80-82. Purves, "The Christology of Thomas F. Torrance," 65.

<sup>921</sup> Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 77; David W. Torrance, "The Vicarious Humanity of Christ, Incarnate, Crucified, Risen, and Ascended," *Participatio Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship Supplemental Vol. 2* (2013).

<sup>922</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation : The Person and Life of Christ*, 129-60.

<sup>923</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>924</sup> Ibid., 134.

atonement sacrifice until he was 'made perfect' by bearing the worst humanity has to offer on the cross.<sup>925</sup> In this sense, Christ the shepherd is truly one of us.

As king, Christ brought the sovereign kingdom of God to bear on humanity. Torrance writes that "[Christ] was perfectly free to be what he was and to do what he had come to do. (...) He was not bound by man, by any power of nature or history, by any of the fetters and shackles which all other men and women know only too well."<sup>926</sup> While in compassion Christ was increasingly encapsulated by our brokenness, as king he was free and his kingdom violently imposed itself on our estranged humanity exposing humanity's vain attempts to establish itself independently through religious, political, or social power. God's faithfulness towards humanity thus also involved the dethroning of humanity's false gods which corrupted humanity's true identity as God's creatures created *ex nihilo*. Torrance describes the arrival of God's kingdom in Christ as follows: "It meant the time had been fulfilled, and the time was at hand, had even now overtaken the world, when the kingdom of God was present, threatening to uproot every earthly dominion, every human power, and all their entrenched authorities and sanctions. Final judgment had begun (...)." <sup>927</sup> Christ's faithfulness towards humans thus also involves the judgment of our fallenness. This judgment is done on our behalf: "Jesus (...) gathers into the sovereign grace of the kingdom all the very worst that man can do, in order thus to break the power of guilt and set people free from being the rebels that they had become."<sup>928</sup> Christ's judgment as king liberates us from our own constructed demeaning schemes that marginalize people.

Christ's human-directed movement of faithfulness has a double outcome: On the one hand, Christ in compassion submits to the earthly corrupt powers and ailments. He lets himself be victimized and eventually be killed in complete solidarity with our alienation and marginalization. Christ is 'dehumanized' in his faithfulness towards humanity. On the other hand, Christ's sovereignty exposes the very dehumanization he takes on. Paradoxically, from birth to death Christ displays both submission to our condition and judgment of our condition.

### **Unity of Christ's Double Movement**

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<sup>925</sup> Ibid., 136-7.

<sup>926</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>927</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>928</sup> Ibid., 156.

The dynamic account of Torrance's atoning hypostatic union thus has several dimensions which all need to be seen within Christ's unity of the person and duality of natures. It is the undivided Christ who both makes our sinful humanity his own as well as embodies God for us. Torrance writes that as Jesus

involved himself more and more, intertwined himself more and more completely with sinners, until in the fullest sense and most personal sense he was the representative of the divine judge to us, condemning by his truth our sin in the flesh, and was also our representative, representing us the judged as he wore our humanity. Because he was God's Son become man he could both incarnate God for us, and represent us before God, this one man on behalf of all men and women.<sup>929</sup>

Christ in his two natures was thus a double representative, representing God to humanity and humanity to God. The uncompromised integrity of the natures in the incarnation signifies the complete nature of Christ's double representation. Christ faithfully represents us sinners before the Father as the one and only Son of the Father and faithfully represents God the Father as the Father's consubstantial Son in true human form.

As we have seen above, however, this unity of representation had within itself a dissonance due to our sin. The growing closeness between God and humanity leads to an intensifying contradiction and enmity between God and humanity. The Son's filial faithfulness leads to him being judged by the Father and the Son's compassionate taking on of our brokenness goes hand in hand with the Son's cataclysmic exposure of our condition. The cross is both the Son's exposure of our condition and the taking on of that very condition. In Christ, God is both just to sinners and justifier of sinners. These two are held together by the dual faithfulness of the one person of Christ.<sup>930</sup> The hypostatic union, dynamically understood as Christ's mediating movements between God and humanity throughout his life, cannot lead anywhere but the crucifixion where Christ endured the full contradiction of his perfected unity and through which Christ's true liminality becomes apparent.

### **Towards a Doctrine of a Liminal Christ**

Following the steps towards a doctrine of a liminal Trinity in the previous chapter, the remainder of this chapter is devoted to the application of our conceptual tools,

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<sup>929</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>930</sup> Ibid., 152.

liminality,<sup>931</sup> non-place,<sup>932</sup> liquidity,<sup>933</sup> and constructive marginality,<sup>934</sup> to Christology. The goal is to describe the person and work of Christ in categories that TCKs who themselves live life in liminality<sup>935</sup> can appreciate. While liminality in the life of the Trinity focused on maintaining otherness among the three Trinitarian persons in their relations, the liminality of Christ takes place under the impact of sin and the focus thus shifts to establishing harmony between two parties at odds. The liminality of Christ, nevertheless, reflects the eternal liminality of the Trinity.

### **Liminality in Christ**

As we have seen so far, the Godward movement and humanward movement in Christ each have two aspects: In this vicarious humanity we see Christ living out the life of the perfect Son representing humanity and also accepting God's judgment of fallen humanity as a substitute (Godward movement). Through the incarnation of the divine person of the Son, we also see God identifying with sinners as well as the divine exposure of human corruption (Humanward movement). The simultaneous identification with sinners who reject God and rejection of sinners by God leads to the incarnate Son's intensifying liminality betwixt and between God and humanity. Christ's liminality is driven by contradiction.

Torrance writes that "there are, then, three factors to be taken into account, God and mankind, or God and his people, the two parties of the covenant partnership, but within that polarity, the all-important middle factor, *the vicarious humanity of Jesus*."<sup>936</sup> The incarnate Son emerges as a third standing on the threshold between God and humanity, simultaneously representing both divinity and humanity: God in divine judgment of sin on the one hand and the perfect humanity in the active obedience of Christ's vicarious humanity on the other hand. Through his birth, life, death, and resurrection, Christ displays what true humanity in harmony with God looks like. The anhypostatic assumed humanity is brought fully to life

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<sup>931</sup> Turner, "Liminality and Community."; "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites De Passage*."

<sup>932</sup> Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*.

<sup>933</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*.

<sup>934</sup> Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training."; Yoshikawa, "Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Perceptual Development."; "The Double Swing Model of Intercultural Communication between the East and the West."; Bochner, *The Mediating Person: Bridges between Cultures*.

<sup>935</sup> Schaetti and Ramsey, "The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality."

<sup>936</sup> Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 77.



through being enhypostatic in the person of the perfect Son of the Father.<sup>937</sup> The Son also brings the presence of a holy God into a fallen world thus exposing humanity's corruption and judging it, establishing God on earth as sovereign creator. In this positive sense, the two-natured incarnate Son is thus both divine and human.

However, there are also the other two aspects of the twofold God/humanward movements: God identifying with sinful humanity and taking on their ungodly corruption on the one hand and Christ's passive acceptance of the godly destruction of our fallen humanity on the other hand. These two aspects begin with the birth of the incarnate Son but find their most visible climax in the crucifixion. Regarding the former, the life and death of Christ describes God's descend into human godforsakenness. In forgiving and healing humanity, the Son takes on humanity's sin and sickness. This finds its apex in Jesus's quotation of Psalm 22:1 on the cross: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'<sup>938</sup> The Son's identification with sinful humanity is brought to completion with the 'death of God' on the cross.<sup>939</sup> Interestingly, however, the Son's descent into godforsakenness is paralleled by the Son's increasing persecution by humanity who reject him. The Son, in passive obedience, advances towards the cross and willingly suffers the increasing dehumanization. God here uses the sinful rejection of the Son of God by humanity in order to put to death and destroy the fallen humanity Christ assumed. The Son's bringing of God's judgment to humanity thus finds its completion in the total destruction of the fallen human nature in Christ on the cross. In this negative sense, the two-natured Son must be said to also be neither God nor human but completely alien to both God and humanity in the crucifixion's 'de-divinization' and dehumanization. This fits well with Victor Turner's description of liminality as 'death', the loss of rights, but also the transcendence of categories.<sup>940</sup> The crucifixion, far from being an encapsulating defeat, reveals Christ's 'sacred poverty'. The deconstruction of God and humanity on the cross liberates Christ from the absolute categories God and humanity.

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<sup>937</sup> *Incarnation : The Person and Life of Christ*, 84, 227-33.

<sup>938</sup> *The Mediation of Christ*, 43.

<sup>939</sup> This death of God is of course repeated with every instance of complete godforsakenness in which the Son of God descends in solidarity. See for example the Eliezer's answer to the question of where God is when a child was hung in Monowitz concentration camp: "Here he is—He is hanging here on this gallows." Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York; London: Bantam Books, 1960), 61-62.

<sup>940</sup> Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites De Passage*."

The liminality of the Son of God in the incarnation consists thus of being both divine and human and neither divine nor human at the same time. It is of utmost importance however, that this liminality of the Son of God be recognized as the reflection of the Son's eternal liminality in the Trinity. The subject of the liminal incarnate Son even in his role betwixt and between God and humanity, even in the godforsakenness and dehumanization on the cross, is not a demigod but the one and only person of the Son. God in God's sovereign freedom remains God even in godforsakenness.

The incarnate Son's liminality exhibits the complex dynamic of the incarnation's Godward and humanward movements and their contradicting dual aspects. The incarnate Christ through his birth, life, death, and resurrection can be described as being both divine and human and also neither divine nor human.

### **Christ as Non-Place**

This liminality can be expanded by theologically utilizing the metaphor of liminal space: non-place.<sup>941</sup> The hypostatic union beginning with the birth of Christ and finding its completion in the death and resurrection of Christ can be understood as the work of the Son to carve out a unique liminal space in between God and humanity. Through the complete 'dedivinization' and dehumanization on the cross, the Son establishes within himself a non-place where previously held identities, histories, relations are disregarded and a fresh start for a new encounter between God and humanity becomes possible. Christ in his person creates a space without judgment in which even the most marginalized are invited to participate and be liberated from the shackles of society's labels. In this sacred non-place, Christ establishes the gracious presence of God.

Christ, being both divine and human as well as neither divine nor human, through himself is able to represent a 'God beyond judgment of humanity' to humanity as well as a 'humanity beyond fallenness' to God. Through Christ's non-place, God's judgment is left behind as God newly enters into relation with humanity as '*Gott-zum-Menschen-hin*.'<sup>942</sup> God, in Christ's non-place between God and humanity, steps out of Godself and reveals Godself to be *pro nobis*. Similarly,

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<sup>941</sup> Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*.

<sup>942</sup> Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*.

humanity can escape the god-hostile environment and through Christ can enter into the theological non-place between God and humanity to meet God in redeemed fashion, as children of God. The betweenness of the person of the incarnate Son far from being an obstacle to be overcome, through the liminality of the hypostatic union becomes the meeting place of God and humanity mediated through the intervention of the Son who not only completely identifies with us but also acts as our substitute on our behalf.

The liminal Christ as non-place thus carves out a sacred space between God and humanity to make possible the encounter of a forgiving God and a repentant humanity. Through this neutral space in Christ, God can be God even in the face of a fallen humanity and morally bankrupt humanity can be humanity even before a holy God. Furthermore, just as Christ's incarnation assured a space for God among fallen humanity, so Christ's ascension assures a space for humanity at God's right hand.

### **Liquid Christ**

Bauman Zygmunt's dual concepts of solid and liquid<sup>943</sup> can also be applied theologically to the incarnate Christ's liminality. Liquidity in Christ signifies Christ's freedom to transcend the dualism of God versus humanity in his liminality. The contradiction of the presence of God's judgment and human fallenness within Christ is overcome through Christ's liquidity. Christ in his liminality as both divine and human as well as neither divine nor human is free to perform multiple conflicting roles within himself. Humanity's sin and God's judgment exist as incompatible solid obstacles preventing any amicable encounter between God and humanity. Christ in his flexible liquidity takes on different shapes to accommodate these solid structures and fill the gap between them. While having assumed the solid structure of a fallen humanity, Christ in his freedom can nevertheless live a faithful filial life in active obedience. While bringing God's solid judgment to bear on creation, Christ in liminal freedom nevertheless can identify with a godforsaken humanity.

Shifting shapes appropriately in Christ's mediating movement, the Son presents to humanity a human-sympathetic God and presents to God a godly humanity. The Son's shape shifting liquidity is thus able to fill the gaps between God

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<sup>943</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*.

and humanity and fulfil the demands of God as well as meet the needs of humanity. In his liminality, he shows his willingness to mediate and work towards reconciliation by actively using his liquidity not to remain aloof and above the messiness of the divine-human conflict, but to take on different roles shifting from liquid to solid and solid to liquid to represent both God and humanity within his person. This, of course, points to a constructive marginality in Christ able to act purposefully to accomplish the reconciliation of God and humanity.

### **Constructive Marginality**

Throughout Christ's life, Christ in his liminality shows the ability to construct contexts intentionally, remain authentic, and shift smoothly between different roles both representing God to humanity (in identifying with fallen humanity but also in judging human corruption) and humanity to God (in active and passive obedience). Christ thus displays a constructive marginality as opposed to an encapsulating marginality.<sup>944</sup> Christ does so by overcoming the dichotomy of God versus humanity through his dynamic in-betweenness<sup>945</sup> and through his mediation<sup>946</sup> of revelation and reconciliation.

Bochner et al. describe the ideal mediator as someone with "two skills in one skull."<sup>947</sup> A mediator must be able to both genuinely identify as well as freely transcend. The one person of Christ in two natures does exactly that. Christ's constructive marginality can be described in terms of Christ's bilinguality (mediation of revelation) and biculturality (mediation of reconciliation).

Torrance often describes Christ's mediation in terms of the translation of language.<sup>948</sup> He writes that Christ "assumed human speech into himself as the Word of God in such a way as to address us precisely *as human word*, without ceasing to be the Word of God."<sup>949</sup> And furthermore, argues that "Jesus is also the real text of our address to God. We have no speech or language with which to address God but the speech and language called Jesus Christ. In him our humanity, our human

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<sup>944</sup> Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training."

<sup>945</sup> Yoshikawa, "The Double Swing Model of Intercultural Communication between the East and the West."

<sup>946</sup> Bochner, *The Mediating Person: Bridges between Cultures*.

<sup>947</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>948</sup> See for example: Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 76-79; *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 40-41.

<sup>949</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 41.

understanding, our human word are taken up, purified and sanctified, and addressed to God the Father for us as our very own—and that is the word with which God is well pleased.”<sup>950</sup> Being two-natured thus means to be a bilingual native speaker of both God’s speech and human speech in one person. Jesus reveals God to humanity by faithfully translating God’s Word into human speech and form. Jesus being the divine speaker is also the faithful listener in his vicarious humanity, listening to the word of God in his active obedience on behalf of humanity. Reversely, Jesus guarantees that our human speech is translated into acceptable speech before God and given an audience. The human word of godforsakenness on the cross of Christ is, through Christ’s passive obedience, translated (‘purified and sanctified’) and heard loud and clear by God in Christ’s identification with sinful humanity. In his liminality, Christ then acts as the bilingual translator who is native to both God and humanity. As native speaker as well as faithful listener, Christ ensures that God’s Word to humanity and humanity’s word to God are not lost in translation.

Christ’s two skills in one skull also extend to his mediation of reconciliation. The cause for the enmity between God and humanity is not merely a problem of miscommunication but a problem of disobedience. As bicultural mediator who understands both God’s point of view as well as humanity’s point of view, Christ steps between God and humanity to represent humanity’s ‘culture’ acceptably before God and God’s ‘culture’ acceptably before humanity. On the one hand, Christ brings with him the presence of God. This presence of God does not consist of arbitrary judgment of humanity but of the faithful establishment of the kingdom of God through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Christ presents God to humanity in a form that humanity can participate in through identifying with Christ. On the other hand, Christ presents to God a faithful humanity both willing to actively depend on the Father as well as passively agreeing to the undoing of our sinful human nature on the cross. Thus, even the crucifixion, which at first seems like an encapsulating event, is infused with intentionality and purpose so that for Christ it is part of his constructive marginality.

As mediator between God and humanity, Christ then can be understood as a Third Culture Kid betwixt and between God and humanity who can speak both the native tongues of God and humanity and who is able to faithfully live out God’s way

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<sup>950</sup> *The Mediation of Christ*, 78-79.

of life as well as humanity's way of life. This is possible through the unique liminality of Christ who is both divine and human but who also transcends these two categories by also being neither divine nor human.

### **Conclusion**

We have so far traced liminality as a theological idea from the liminality of the divine persons in the Trinity to the liminality of the incarnate Son between God and humanity. In the person and work of Christ the mediator we have also been able to more explicitly portray Christ as a bilingual and bicultural proto-TCK. As proto-TCK, Christ is a native of divinity and also humanity but is able to freely mediate between the two by transcending the dichotomy of God versus humanity by embodying an identity as the third who is neither divine nor human.

Importantly, Christ as 'the third' between God and humanity who is able to transcend both God and humanity, far from being an alien other, is the very embodiment of a liminal God. This means that God in God's liminality is a self-transcending God and the Son's liminality between God and humanity is a faithful working out within the economy of salvation the eternal liminality of the life of the Trinity. While the incarnation certainly is a new event for God, the mediation of Christ is nevertheless in accordance with whom God is. In the words of Torrance, the liminal Christ's mediation "reveals that [God] loves us more than he loves himself—the transcendent sovereignty of the eternal love of God."<sup>951</sup>

It remains now to spell out how the liminality of Christ plays out in the justification of believers and the construction of their identity as liminal children of God.

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<sup>951</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 215.

## Chapter 18

### Towards a Liminal Christian Identity

#### Introduction

From Nozomu Miyahira we have adopted the ‘God-Christ-believer’ structure and this chapter constitutes the third act in our argument from a liminal doctrine of the Trinity, through a liminal doctrine of Christ in two natures, to a doctrine of a liminal Christian identity. Through Emil Brunner we have recast Christianity as the answer to the question of human identity. The ‘God-Christ-believer’ structure thus tells the story of how God bestows new identities unto God’s creatures. This chapter focuses on the question of how a liminal God and saviour impacts believers’ everyday lives on earth. We have fleshed out this structure using Thomas Torrance’s mediation-themed theology and have constructed a theology fitting to TCKs with liminality as the underlying theme that connects everything. Sticking with the theme of liminality together with non-place, liquidity, and constructive marginality, this chapter makes the case for a liminal Christian identity.

First, this chapter reviews how liminality has conventionally been understood in the experience of believers. Next, using Torrance’s insights, it makes the case for Christ as the person who bestows believers with their identity. Third, the chapter argues for the construction of a Christian liminal identity through justification in Christ, before concluding with a review of how a TCK theology impacts TCKs’ quest for an internal locus of integrity.

#### Liminality and Faith

Liminality as a spiritual theme permeates Christian faith. For example, believers experience liminality being *simul iustus et peccator*, in anticipation of the Kingdom of God already and not yet here, or as living both heavenly and earthy lives. More often than not, spiritual liminality involves a personal crisis of faith.<sup>952</sup> St. John of the Cross’ 16<sup>th</sup> century treatise, *Dark Night of the Soul*, represents perhaps the most

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<sup>952</sup> Anne Franks and John Meteyard, "Liminality: The Transforming Grace of in-between Places," *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 61, no. 3 (2007); Michelle Trebilcock, "Living with Jesus in Liminality: An Invitation to ‘Be Dead with the Dead God.’," *Crucible* 4, no. 1 (2012).

famous case of such spiritual liminality.<sup>953</sup> Michelle Trebilcock describes the experience of liminality among believers as “an *apophatic* experience of loss and deconstruction.”<sup>954</sup> Anne Franks and John Meteyard describe liminality in terms of displacement: “that sense of being in no man’s land, where the landscape appears completely different, there is no discernible road map, and where the journeyer is jolted out of normalcy.”<sup>955</sup> Liminality is here portrayed as a critical interruption of one’s faith journey which upon resolution ideally leads to an encounter with God on a deeper level.

Franks and Meteyard outline three scriptural metaphors of liminality as points of orientation: the tomb of Christ; wilderness; exile.<sup>956</sup> First, the tomb of Christ, between the death and resurrection of Christ, represents a powerful image for the spiritually liminal. Believers are invited to identify with Christ in his tomb awaiting resurrection.<sup>957</sup> The tomb captures the pain of loss as one disidentifies with one’s old self. It represents the act of dying to oneself in order to move towards a more authentic self. In this sense, the liminality of the tomb leads to liberation from inauthentic constructed selves.

Second, the wandering through the wilderness<sup>958</sup> represents a common metaphor for spiritual liminality. The wilderness stands for the experience of emptiness and loss of security and ideally leads to discovering a sense of security in God. Spiritual pilgrims wandering the wilderness have the opportunity to break with their previous lives and construct new patterns of behaviour reflecting a newfound trust in and dependence on God.

Third, exile<sup>959</sup> exists as a rich biblical theme for believers in liminality. According to Franks and Meteyard, exiles are confronted with two tasks: the need to adapt in order to be able to live in integrity while not at home and the need to transcend themselves by finding ‘home’ in God, rather than a culture or nation.<sup>960</sup>

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<sup>953</sup> "Living with Jesus in Liminality: An Invitation to ‘Be Dead with the Dead God.’," 3. See also how *Dark Night of the Soul* relates to crisis of faith and depression: G. Durà-Vilà and S. Dein, "The Dark Night of the Soul: Spiritual Distress and Its Psychiatric Implications," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 12, no. 6 (2009).

<sup>954</sup> Trebilcock, "Living with Jesus in Liminality: An Invitation to ‘Be Dead with the Dead God.’," 2.

<sup>955</sup> Franks and Meteyard, "Liminality: The Transforming Grace of in-between Places," 216.

<sup>956</sup> *Ibid.*, 218-20.

<sup>957</sup> Trebilcock, "Living with Jesus in Liminality: An Invitation to ‘Be Dead with the Dead God.’,"

<sup>958</sup> E.g. Moses, the Exodus, David, John the Baptist, Jesus.

<sup>959</sup> E.g. Babylonian captivity, Jewish diaspora.

<sup>960</sup> Franks and Meteyard, "Liminality: The Transforming Grace of in-between Places," 219.



The hoped-for outcome of such exilic experience of liminality is the increased openness to “many different expressions of identity, culture, and community, without the nostalgically longing for the familiar.”<sup>961</sup>

According to Trebilcock, such experiences of liminality are common and actually necessary in order to mature as a believer: “It is not that the whole of the religious life is lived in liminality, but rather that liminal moments and movements are an essential element to a constantly unfolding encounter with God.”<sup>962</sup> This raises the important question of how TCKs are to understand their experience of liminality in light of this common framing of liminality in Christian experience in terms of a temporary crisis of faith. Trebilcock focuses on the metaphor of the tomb and suggests that believers going through a period of liminality ought to imagine themselves as experiencing Holy Saturday and ‘be dead with the dead God’ until such time that God deems them ready to experience a personal resurrection.<sup>963</sup> However, “there is nothing to do but wait”<sup>964</sup> is hardly the appropriate Christian response to the TCK’s experience of living in perpetual liminality.<sup>965</sup>

Instead of categorising the experience of liminality as a temporary crisis of faith which will eventually be resolved through an encounter with God, it is more fitting for TCKs to establishing the encounter with God itself as an event which ascribes new meaning to TCKs’ liminality in a constructive way. As we have already seen in our argument for a liminal doctrine of the Trinity and of Christ, liminality need not be encapsulating but can be constructive through purposeful action such as mediation. Thus, far from an encapsulating liminal experience, the encounter with God, as we have explored through Brunner in chapter 13, ought to enable TCKs to transact their liminality constructively by providing internalized spiritual values which can help TCKs achieve an integrated, higher order, ethnorelative self-concept.<sup>966</sup> The question is thus how we can construct an account of Christian liminality as a model for TCK which can resolve the encapsulating search for authenticity.

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<sup>961</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>962</sup> Trebilcock, "Living with Jesus in Liminality: An Invitation to 'Be Dead with the Dead God.'," 10.

<sup>963</sup> Ibid.

<sup>964</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>965</sup> Schaetti and Ramsey, "The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality."

<sup>966</sup> Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 204-05.

Nevertheless, the theme of death plays a pivotal role in the construction of the believer's liminal identity.<sup>967</sup> Death also represents a key metaphor for the state of liminality in Victor Turner.<sup>968</sup> Brunner argues that the identity-bestowing encounter with God involves the believer being 'sucked into' the death of Christ so that the death of Christ becomes a real death and Christ's resurrection the real resurrection as '*Mensch-von-Gott-her*' of the believer.<sup>969</sup> The believer's identification with the liminal death and resurrection of Christ thus stands out as the crucial event through which God forms the believer's permanent liminal Christian identity. In this sense, we will thus treat the invitation to 'be dead with the dead God' (i.e. to become liminal with the liminal God) as the key concept in understanding how God bestows believers with a God-given liminal identity.

### **The Personalised Person and the Personalising Person**

Torrance's 1988 article, *The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition*, outlines his vision of what true human existence should be in light of Christ's redemptive mediation.<sup>970</sup> Torrance argues that in the hypostatic union Christ assumes our fallen human nature and redeems it within his person in order to restore humanity to what it is destined to be: genuine personhood in inter-human relations reflecting, in a creaturely way, the uncreated personal relations within the Trinity.<sup>971</sup> God in God's tripersonal being constitutes the fullness of personal being and the ideal humanity should reflect in their creaturely way.<sup>972</sup> Torrance writes:

[W]e may not understand what it means to speak of God as Person or as personal in terms of what human beings are in themselves and in their relations to one another, for human personhood is to be understood properly by relation to the creative Personhood of God. We must think of God, rather, as '*personalising Person*', and of ourselves as '*personalised persons*', people who are personal primarily through ontorelations to him as the creative Source of our personal being, and secondarily through

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<sup>967</sup> For example: Gal. 2.20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me"; Gal. 4.16 "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world"; Col. 2.7 "I have been buried with him in baptism"; Col. 2:20 "Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of the world (...); Phil. 3.10 "becoming like him in death".

<sup>968</sup> Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites De Passage*."

<sup>969</sup> Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, 114-15.

<sup>970</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, "The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition," *Modern Theology* 4, no. 4 (1988).

<sup>971</sup> *Ibid.*, 311-12.

<sup>972</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 161.

onto-relations to one another within the subject-subject structures of our creaturely being as they have come from him.<sup>973</sup>

For Torrance the *imago dei* lies in this human capacity to be fully personalised through our relation to God and in our relations to others.<sup>974</sup> Similarly to Miyahira's argument of human 'betweenness' and concord reflecting divine 'betweenness' and concord,<sup>975</sup> Torrance argues that human persons ought to reflect the transcendent person-constituting onto-relations in God. The vertical onto-relation to our Creator and the horizontal onto-relation to other human beings constitute human personhood.<sup>976</sup>

The Son and the Spirit reveal and activate God's "personalising and humanising power."<sup>977</sup> "Jesus is the personalising activity of God"<sup>978</sup> through whom we can become genuine persons. The incarnate Son is the one person who is properly in the image of God and also discloses and establishes humanity's true image.<sup>979</sup> Torrance argues that Christ is the 'humanising man' as he is both the source of humanity and humanity par excellence.<sup>980</sup> Christ takes our corrupted humanity and humanises it in himself through his active and passive obedience to the Father. Believers take part in Christ's true humanity by uniting themselves to Christ through the work of the Spirit. Thus, "[f]or us to be human, therefore, is to be in Christ."<sup>981</sup>

Furthermore, Torrance argues the Son is the 'personalising person' as in the incarnation human nature becomes fully real in the person of the Son. The Son is the personalising person and we who are united to Christ through the Spirit are the personalised persons who derive our personhood from the Son.<sup>982</sup> Torrance's definition of human person is founded on his understanding of the Trinitarian persons in their onto-relations. Humans, created in the image of God, are called to live in constitutive relations towards others mirroring the Trinitarian persons. Thus,

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<sup>973</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>974</sup> "The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition," 310-12.

<sup>975</sup> Miyahira, *Towards a Theology of the Concord of God: A Japanese Perspective on the Trinity*.

<sup>976</sup> Torrance, "The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition," 311.

<sup>977</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 206.

<sup>978</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>979</sup> "The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition," 317.

<sup>980</sup> Ibid., 318.

<sup>981</sup> Ibid.

<sup>982</sup> Ibid.; *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 160. See also: Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 178.

Torrance summarizes: "To be truly human is to be truly personal, and to be truly personal is to be truly human."<sup>983</sup>

Torrance explains this humanisation / personalisation in the Son through the two complementary concepts of 'anhypostasis' and 'enhypostasis'.<sup>984</sup> *Anhypostasis* asserts that in the assumption the human nature of Christ has no independent hypostasis or subsistence apart from the hypostatic union with the person of the Son. It stresses the general humanity of Jesus, the adamic fallen human nature the Son assumed.<sup>985</sup> It also expresses Christ's ontological solidarity with all of humanity.<sup>986</sup> *Enhypostasis* asserts that in the assumption the human nature was given a real concrete hypostasis or subsistence in the hypostatic union with the perfect person of the Son.<sup>987</sup> It stresses the particular humanity of the man Jesus who is none other than the eternal person of the Son.<sup>988</sup> In the continuous hypostatic union our anhypostatically assumed fallen nature is enhypostatically healed and restored through the personalising and humanising work of the personalised and humanised person of the Son.<sup>989</sup>

In being 'in Christ', a believer is united with the Son through the mediation of the Spirit and thus can "transcend [*sic*] his original creation [and] exist not just alongside the Creator, but in such a way that his human being is anchored in the very Being of God."<sup>990</sup> It is in the Spirit that the humanising and personalising work of the Son is actualised within believers.<sup>991</sup> Thus the objective reconciliation in the hypostatic union of the Son goes hand in hand with the subjective actualisation of that reconciliation within us through the Spirit. For Torrance, not only Christ's objective identification with our humanity but our subjective identification with Christ through the Spirit play an important role.

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<sup>983</sup> Torrance, "The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition," 318.

<sup>984</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 160.

<sup>985</sup> *Incarnation : The Person and Life of Christ*, 230-31.

<sup>986</sup> "The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition," 317.

<sup>987</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, 160.

<sup>988</sup> *Incarnation : The Person and Life of Christ*, 230-31.

<sup>989</sup> See also: Chiarot, *The Unassumed Is the Unhealed : The Humanity of Christ in the Theology of T.F. Torrance*, Ch. 4.

<sup>990</sup> Torrance, "The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition," 321. Since Torrance maintains an ontological bond of Christ and all of humanity, he remains rather ambiguous as to what it means to be human yet not 'in Christ.'

<sup>991</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance : Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology*, 230-33.

The humanisation and personalisation of Christ in the incarnation cannot be understood apart from the selfless love of God to go beyond Godself for the sake of humanity. Reflecting God's eternal love for the other in the Trinity, God's relation to creation reveals that "God actually loves us more than he loves himself."<sup>992</sup> Thus, Torrance argues that human 'goodness and dignity' also consists in selflessly loving others not for our own sake. Christ's humanising and personalising power is actualised in our lives by us going beyond ourselves.<sup>993</sup> Torrance writes:

[T]he relations of Love between the Person of the Holy Trinity belong essentially to what the Divine Person are. (...) God has created human beings in such a way that their inter-human relations are meant to be inter-personal, and as such are meant to reflect on the level of the creature the inter-personal relations of God himself.<sup>994</sup>

Human persons are called to transcend themselves and enter into the 'betweenness' of inter-human relations. Torrance envisions humans in their union with Christ through the Spirit to act as "a kind of midwife to creation" and "the priest of creation."<sup>995</sup> By this he means that in going beyond themselves to love others for their sake, believers bring the best out in creatures and contribute to the emergence of richer forms of life. As 'priests of creation' believers play a role in the redemption of creation. Believer's selfless love for others gives life to harmonious creaturely diversity. Both 'midwife to creation' and 'priest of creation' are concepts pregnant with significance for TCKs in their liminality as they connote intercession and mediation for the sake of others.

### **Towards a Liminal Christian Identity**

Now that we discussed Torrance's theological anthropology, we can reinterpret the significance of Christ's personalisation and humanisation in terms of liminality. So far we have portrayed the Trinitarian persons as liminal persons in between two others and Christ as the incarnate liminal person in between God and humanity. The goal is now to portray Torrance's believers' identity in Christ as 'midwives to creation' or 'priests of creation' within our framework of liminality. For TCKs, to be truly personal is to be constructively liminal reflecting the transcendent liminality of

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<sup>992</sup> Torrance, "The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition," 318.

<sup>993</sup> Ibid., 318-19.

<sup>994</sup> Ibid., 320. In this sense, Torrance is in agreement with Miyahira for whom human persons are human 'betweennesses.'

<sup>995</sup> Ibid., 322.

the Trinity through the redemptive liminality of Christ. Thus, in the context of a TCK theology, God's act of justifying sinners through the righteousness of Christ signifies God's gracious bestowing of a new redeemed liminal identity onto believers through the personalising work of the liminal mediator Christ in whose death believers dwell.

In union with Christ, Christ's liminality has a double significance as the humanisation and personalisation of Christ's assumed fallen humanity becomes the humanisation and personalisation of each believer's human person. Christ's vicarious humanity in Christ's Godward movement of passive and active obedience becomes the believer's passive and active obedience before God. This means that, on the one hand, Christ's dehumanising movement that ends in the judgment and destruction of sinful humanity in the crucifixion also becomes the believer's movement of deidentification with constructed identities which have idolatrously taken the place of humanity's primary identity as '*Mensch-von-Gott-her*.'<sup>996</sup> Believers participate in the passion of Christ so that the death of Christ becomes the real death of the believer where previously held constructed identities are exposed as falling short of what God envisioned for humanity, judged, and destroyed. The cross shatters believer's trust in human institutions and sense of security in the identities these institutions construct. The personalisation that occurs in Christ thus involves the deconstruction of our false notions of what it means to be human persons. In the words of the Lutheran theologian Robert Kolb, "God kills to make alive."<sup>997</sup>

On the other hand, in the personalisation in Christ a constructive development runs parallel to the above described deconstruction of our fallen humanity. In union with Christ, the active obedience of the Son, expressing itself in dependence and trust in the Father, become the believer's expression of dependence and trust in the Father through Christ. Our fallen human nature is properly personalised and humanised in the person of the Son. In Christ and through the work of the Spirit our new identity as '*Mensch-von-Gott-her*' is constructed through identification with the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

It is not enough to merely argue that God bestows new identities on believers through the liminal mediation of the Son. In participating in Christ's liminality,

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<sup>996</sup> Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, 33.

<sup>997</sup> Robert Kolb, "God Kills to Make Alive : Romans 6 and Luther's Understanding of Justification (1535)," *Lutheran Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (1998).

believers enter Christ's liminality. In Christ's non-place, people leave their loyalties behind in their anthropological places. In Christ's liquidity, believer's identities are dissolved. However, what kind of personhood takes the place of what is deconstructed for TCKs? Torrance speaks of midwives and priests who love beyond themselves but what does that mean for TCKs in their liminality? What is the content of '*Mensch-von-Gott-her*' in the context of a TCK theology?

Torrance makes the case that human personhood reflects the divine persons of the Trinity. This means that for a TCK theology, the liminality of the Trinitarian persons finds an expression in the redeemed identities of believers. However, while believers participate in Christ's liminality, their liminality differs from Christ's. In his liminality, Christ mediates betwixt and between God and humanity, creating a neutral space for humanity and God to meet by being at once both divine and human and neither divine nor human through death and resurrection. Believers are the ones who are mediated and reconciled to God through the Son in the Spirit, not the ones who then subsequently mimic the mediating between the divine persons. Creaturely liminality, while mirroring divine liminality, must do so in a creaturely fitting way within a world full of groups at odds with each other. In what sense are believers 'both/and' and 'neither/nor'?

### **Justification as Liminal Identity**

In order to more explicitly outline the liminality implied in the human identity as 'midwife to creation' and 'priest of creation', we will turn to Robert Kolb's creative modern reinterpretation of Luther's concept of the two kinds of righteousness as two dimensions of human identity.<sup>998</sup> Kolb's novel framework argues that the doctrine of justification is the answer to the question of what it means to be human. Luther's two kinds of righteousness (passive, Christ's righteousness; active, proper righteousness) signify the two relationships or dimensions (vertical in relation with God; horizontal

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<sup>998</sup> "Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness. Reflections on His Twodimensional Definition of Humanity at the Heart of His Theology," *Lutheran Quarterly* 13 (1999); Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *Genius of Luther's Theology : The Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Pub. Group, 2008); Robert Kolb, "Mensch-Sein in zwei Dimensionen: Die zweierlei Gerechtigkeit und Luthers *De Votis Monasticis Iudicium*," in *Luther und das monastische Erbe*, ed. Christoph Bultmann, Volker Leppin, and Andreas Lindner (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

in relation to others) of our human existence and help make the case for believer's liminal identity both 'neither/nor' and 'both/and'.<sup>999</sup>

First, the justification of sinners (or personalisation / humanisation of believers in Torrance's words) restores believers' relation with God. Christ's righteousness thus constitutes believers' core or primary identity before God. In Brunner's words, justification regenerates human beings as '*Mensch-von-Gott-her*.' Christ's righteousness is seen in his trust toward the loving Father and this trusting, vertical relationship constitutes believers' fundamental identity.<sup>1000</sup> Believers are theologically defined by God through identification in faith with Christ's death and resurrection.<sup>1001</sup>

Second, this core identity is lived out and performed through the secondary righteousness in horizontal relationships to others.<sup>1002</sup> Our love towards other creatures is a reflection of our core identity. The two must be held together as the one influences the other but must be distinguished as our theological identity bestowed on us by God through faith transcends our secondary social affiliations. The secondary, proper righteousness is fulfilled in our familiar, economic, political, and religious responsibilities to others but is done so under the impact of the primary core identity provided to us through Christ's liminality.<sup>1003</sup>

The two dimensions to human identity are also expressed in Luther's 1520 treatise *On the Freedom of a Christian* in terms of human freedom and responsibility: "A Christian is a free lord over all things and subject to no one. A Christian is a dutiful servant to all things and subject to all."<sup>1004</sup> On the one hand, a Christian is neither this nor that since believers undergo a real death and a real resurrection through their participation in Christ's liminality. Previous identities are undone and left behind. Neither political nor cultural nor economic standings have a say in the believer's encounter with God in Christ's mediating liminality. On the other hand, Christians always express their primary identity as liberated '*Mensch-von-Gott-her*' through their secondary social responsibilities as gendered, political,

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<sup>999</sup> "Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness. Reflections on His Twodimensional Definition of Humanity at the Heart of His Theology," 449-59.

<sup>1000</sup> Kolb and Arand, *Genius of Luther's Theology : The Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church*, 33-52.

<sup>1001</sup> Kolb, "God Kills to Make Alive : Romans 6 and Luther's Understanding of Justification (1535)."

<sup>1002</sup> Kolb and Arand, *Genius of Luther's Theology : The Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church*, 53-76.

<sup>1003</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-64.

<sup>1004</sup> Martin Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian*, 1520. (WA 7:50)



ethnic, economic beings to their neighbours but do so under the impact of the liberation from the constraints of these constructed national, political, ethnic, economic etc. identities.

Torrance's vision of human beings as midwives to creation and priests of creation thus needs to be seen in the light of the two dimensions of human existence: Christ's righteousness which liberates believers to be neither this nor that and believers' proper righteousness which enables them to freely identify in solidarity with others. The freedom that springs from Christ's liminality thus frees believers to take on different representative roles within creation while transcending these.

In this sense, the believer's secondary righteousness which flows from the primary righteousness of the liminal Christ consists in 'standing in the gap' and mediating. A Christian is thus obligated, in objective love for the sake of the other, to take on the case of the neglected, the weak, the disadvantaged, the marginalized, or the victimized. In mediation, Christians naturally also have the obligation to stand in for and represent the accused. Liminal Christians thus find themselves in the 'unhappy middle' betwixt and between groups at odds with each other. Believers in their liminal Christian identity thus on the one hand transcend the particularities of social identities and are freed from both the need to depend on them in order to 'be someone' as well as from the demands that such constructed identities might make. Believers' speaking from within the liminality of Christ are thus free to speak out against injustice among their own and show solidarity even to the alien other.

In accordance with our understanding of Turner's liminality as being both 'neither/nor' and 'both/and', liminal believers in union with the liminal Christ both belong to no one in particular while at the same time are free to identify with anyone. Christians are always both apart from the constructed identities in our society and a part of the diverse identities of creatures. Christians are always both not at home and always at home. Being '*Mensch-von-Gott-her*' in the context of a TCK theology thus means being liminal in a creaturely way as God is liminal in a transcendent way.

### **Justification and Non-Place**

Believers in their liminality as '*Mensch-von-Gott-her*' thus stand in between various groups as mediators, representing both sides yet belonging to neither. This redeemed

liminality can now be expanded on utilizing Marc Augé's concept of non-place.<sup>1005</sup> In Christ, believers stand in and speak from within the non-place Christ created in his own liminality. Believers also function as creators of non-places within their own contexts.

First, identifying with Christ, believers transcend the places they find themselves in. Through the justification by God through faith believers are graciously placed on new ground in Christ's non-place where they are humanised and personalised. Believers stand in Christ's non-place, always simultaneously leaving their anthropological places behind in repentance and renewing their belonging to Christ's non-place in faith by the grace of God.

Second, standing in Christ's non-place, believers can now create a sacred space wherever they find themselves in. Christ's righteousness which provides the space believers inhabit as citizens of heaven now flows over into believer's proper righteousness as they open up non-places for others to enter into. Belonging to the non-place of Christ thus effects the transformation of the space believers find themselves in into non-places betwixt and between the constructed places in society. As midwives to creation and priest of creation liminal believers thus participate in God's redeeming act of creating sacred places in creation that provide refuge and rest for others. Sacred non-places protect the integrity of diverse others while facilitating reconciliation between groups at odds. Under the impact of the liminal space carved out by Christ between God and humanity for the reconciliation of humanity to God and the regeneration of humanity, believers now carve out non-places for others to enter and to find reconciliation. As midwives, believers help create a space for dialog and understanding between conflicting parties and as priests believers interceded for others. Justification thus leads to the creation of non-places where justice for the oppressed, the victimised, or marginalised can be realised.

### **Justification and Liquidity**

As liminal believers belonging to the liminal non-place of Christ and carving out sacred non-places within creation, believers participate in the dissolution of their identities in Christ but also benefit from the liquidity that comes from Christ's justifying liminality in situations they find themselves in. We can thus apply

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<sup>1005</sup> Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*.

Zygmunt Bauman's metaphor of liquidity to liminal believers.<sup>1006</sup> The justification of the believer in Christ's death means the melting of solid structures that limit believers in their regeneration in relation to God but also in their mediation between their neighbours.

However, just as liquidity in the Trinity and liquidity in Christ exists not for the sake of disassociating and emancipating oneself from commitment to others, so in the believer's case the liminal liquidity does not imply a believer's otherworldly aloofness. The newfound liberation believers find in their liquidity through their justification in Christ is meant to be put to work in the proper righteousness of the liminal believer's everyday life. As already seen in the case of non-place, believers as midwives and priests are to reflect the liquidity of the Trinity and Christ in their mediation betwixt and between their neighbours.

The ability to disassociate oneself from particular identities through identifying with Christ gives liminal believers the freedom to purposefully and intentionally shift and take shapes in service of their neighbours. In mediating as midwives and priests, believers are not stuck between blind loyalty to solid structures and cool liquid reservation to commitment but can smoothly shift from one shape to another. In this sense of being both liquid and solid, we can, for example, understand Paul's proclamation that "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus"<sup>1007</sup> and Paul's ability and willingness to "become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some."<sup>1008</sup> In Christ, human liquidity is put in the service of achieving reconciliation. Believers act as the liquid lubricant in order to make possible the peaceful and fruitful encounter between different groups, taking on the forms of various others in solidarity and as representatives while also remaining unbiased as liquid liminal persons in Christ.

### **Justification and Constructive Marginality**

We have so far made the case for a Christian liminality which is different from that of a 'dark night of the soul' in need of consolation. The liminality of Christians through the work and person of the liminal Christ is an excellent example of a

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<sup>1006</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*.

<sup>1007</sup> Gal. 3.28.

<sup>1008</sup> I Cor. 9.22.

constructive case of marginality.<sup>1009</sup> The at times encapsulating experience of liminality in TCKs' lives can be redeemed through a fitting presentation of Christianity which casts liminality in a highly positive light as a God-given gift to believers in order to live faithful lives as God's liminal creatures. In justification in Christ, TCKs are given an internal locus of integrity which does not depend on external ever-shifting circumstances. The spiritual liminal identity, bestowed on believers by a liminal God through a liminal Christ by the power of a liminal Spirit, helps TCKs transact their liminality constructively.

'Midwives to creation' and 'priests of creation' interpreted through the lens of liminality thus shows TCKs their *imago dei* in a familiar and relatable way, namely, as liminal mediators. TCKs' multilingual and transcultural skills lend themselves perfectly in their role as global Christ-like liminal mediators. It gives TCKs a mandate to get involved rather than to withdraw, to commit rather than remain aloof, and to exercise their constructive liminality creatively for the glory of God and the good of their neighbours. Christian faith as a model for the constructive transaction of liminality helps TCKs make sense of their experience betwixt and between people.

### **Bringing Part Three to a Close**

Part three has presented in broad strokes a Christian vision with the question of identity at its centre. Not only that, it has traced liminality as an underlying theological theme through three key theological areas: the doctrine of the Trinity, of Christ, and of a Christian liminal identity. Adapting Brunner's concept of the identity bestowing God, we have made the argument that a liminal God through a liminal saviour bestows a liminal Christian identity on believers. Torrance's mediation-focused theology has naturally lent itself to this end and has played a crucial role in fleshing out Miyahira's 'God-Christ-believer' structure we have adapted from his theology of 'betweenness.'

A TCK theology presents a viable candidate for TCKs as "a solid central core belief"<sup>1010</sup> that lets TCKs integrate their unique experience more meaningfully. With Christianity as a resonating 'personal truth', TCKs can transact their repatriation as a

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<sup>1009</sup> See: Bennett, "Cultural Marginality: Identity Issues in Intercultural Training."

<sup>1010</sup> Schaetti, "Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model," 188.

cosmopolite instead of as a homecomer or stranger. They can have a transnational national identity instead of an insular or merely international national identity. The experience of difference can be normalized instead of rejected or transacted as terminal uniqueness. And finally, the experience of plurality can be transacted within the framework of commitment within relativism instead of dividing dualism, confusing multiplicity, or mere relativism.

A TCK theology provides TCKs with a spiritual dimension of belonging. A liminal identity in Christ functions as the crucial “non-contingent, overarching, and spiritual locus of integrity”<sup>1011</sup> for TCKs. A TCK theology lets TCKs commitment to a “personal set of higher-order values”<sup>1012</sup> based on a vision of Christianity that resonates with TCKs and affirms them in their experience of perpetual liminality. Thus, a TCK theology is a theology for TCKs.

Applying the unique outlook of TCKs to Christianity in order to spell out in a new way concepts that have been overseen or neglected also benefits the wider Christian community. Liminality has turned out to be a fruitful framework through which to conceptualise the transcendent relations in the Trinity, the person and work of Christ, and believer’s Christian identity. For non-TCK believers, a TCK theology presents a fresh look at key theological areas fitting to a church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century faced with questions of identity amid mass migrations. A TCK theology is thus also a theology by TCKs for the benefit of the Church.

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<sup>1011</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>1012</sup> Ibid., 111.

## **A Few Final Words**

### **Accomplishments**

Looking back at the argument for a TCK theology, we can now comment on what has been accomplished, the limitations of a TCK theology in its present form, and the potential for further exploration within the context of a TCK theology.

This dissertation's outline of a TCK theology presents a theological place for TCKs to belong to and to speak out from. We have shown that Christian faith can function as a spiritual home for TCKs. Moreover, Christian faith can function as a fitting liminal home which does not deny TCKs' unique experience of liminality but affirms it in a constructive way. Christian faith also challenges TCKs to commit even within their relativistic outlook to putting their liminality to work in mediation.

Furthermore, a TCK theology successfully argued for a constructive understanding of liminality. TCKs are not called to merely survive in their liminality but to thrive in their restlessness and rootlessness. Tracing the theme of liminality not just in the area of Christology but also in the doctrine of the Trinity and Christian calling paints liminality in an entirely different light. God is not just the fellow sufferer who understands the suffering TCK but the giver of the gift of constructive liminality to TCKs.

Finally, a TCK theology has shown that the theme of liminality can give a constructive theology significant coherence. The doctrine of the Trinity, of Christ, and of the identity of believers could all be discussed using the one underlying theme of liminality. The three theological areas could be treated as naturally related to one another. The 'God-Christ-Believer' line of argument showed beautifully how liminality originates in God, works in the redemption of creation through Christ, and finds fulfilment in the identity and life of believers.

### **Present Limitations**

Not surprisingly, a TCK theology in its current form has its limits. First of all, it is methodologically limited in that it is a contextualisation of theology for a particular group of people. No particular theology can claim to be universal or infallible. A TCK theology needs to be seen as one fallible model of God among many other such theological models. However, a TCK theology adds a crucial perspective to our

communal understanding of who God is and can thus only be of benefit to the study of theology if properly understood as just such a contribution.

A TCK theology is also limited in that it will soon be out of date. I write this as a turbulent year 2015 comes to an end. Acts of terrorism rocked France fuelling xenophobia across Europe. Greece's economic meltdown has cast doubt on the idea of a unified European Union. Great Britain is still not sure if it wants to belong to continental Europe but neither is Scotland sure if it wants to remain within the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, millions of desperate refugees continue to flow into Europe to find both enthusiastic acceptance and angry rejection. Great tension exists between protectionist national identities and more idealistic transnational human solidarity. Who is in and who is out? The question of identity in the face of otherness is thus a very current dilemma and a TCK theology comes as an opportune perspective for churches across Europe. However, sooner or later other questions will overrun us and will demand more fitting theological answers.

However, perhaps the most significant weakness of a TCK theology is its focus on the individual. It treats the question of a Christian identity in a rather individualistic way and stands in contrast with other theologies with the Christian community at their centre. This is an unfortunate side effect of the individualistic nature of TCKs for whom being rooted in a local community proves rather difficult. However, the lack of a proper treatment of liminal Christians and the Christian community can be remedied.

This brings us to the final limitation. A TCK theology so far only addresses three theological areas: the doctrine of God, of Christ, and of believers' identity. While these three key areas together certainly lend a TCK theology a sense of coherence and structure, we cannot call a TCK theology in its current form complete. Other theological areas deserve their rightful attention.

### **Future Potential**

Thus, this dissertation points to the potential for further exploration. The theme of liminality which proved so useful as an underlying unifying theological theme can easily be applied in other theological areas to add towards a more complete TCK theology. Three areas are worth mentioning.

First, to counter the individualistic tendencies, a TCK theology can benefit from an ecclesiology. From the perspective of TCKs, the church represents God's

liminal community which transcends nationalities, cultures, and ethnicities in service of creation. A liminal body of Christ balances both difference and harmony through liminality thus glorifying God through human diversity and co-operation.

Second, the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist as symbolic rites of liminality lend themselves naturally to a TCK theology and provide fertile ground for further exploration. Sacraments, from the perspective of TCKs, are outward signs of the inward gift of liminality from God. They are thus crucial symbols that express a liminal church's identity.

Third, no theology would be complete without an eschatology. From the perspective of TCKs, present liminality can only lead to an ever increasing constructive marginality in the future. A TCK theology thus holds that liminality is not meant to be resolved in the end. Eternity with a liminal God necessarily involves creaturely liminality as well. A TCK theology would therefore benefit from a liminal eschatology.

Thus, a TCK theology promises to also be fruitful in other areas in theology, and it is my hope that TCKs speaking out from their liminal place in Christ can be heard.



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